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ISSUE NO 217
NEXT STAGE OF HISTORY

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EXCLUSIVE: ONLY IN **PLAY**
**ASSASSIN'S
CREED III:
50 SHOCKING
SECRETS**

200+ REVIEWS

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SILENT HILL: DOWNPOUR
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Every launch game torn apart



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⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙ and... ⊙

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It's a turbo-fuelled festival of fun!



EXCLUSIVE ON YOUR DISC



ASSASSIN'S CREED III

The stunning debut trailer for Ubisoft's adventure is here and now you can see what everyone is talking about. For more, check page 8!

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From nabbing free films to freeing up hard drive space, this is a must-watch for all PlayStation 3 owners to boost their console!



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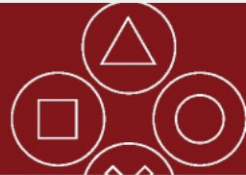
EVERY SKYRIM SECRET

Think you've seen everything *Skyrim* has to offer? You won't know until you watch our video tour of *Skyrim*'s hidden secrets...



SEE THE BACK PAGE FOR MORE!





50 SHOCKING SECRETS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT ASSASSIN'S CREED III

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND AMAZING FACTS ABOUT THE BIGGEST GAME THIS YEAR

THE DEADLIEST COMBAT ON PS3

01 RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

The sprint system has been updated since last time around. Players will be able to hold a button to instantly turn and run from danger.

02 BRAND-NEW CAMERA

The game's camera has been updated to offer more dynamic views of the action. Ubisoft is hoping the change will make the experience more cinematic for the player.

03 COUNTER-ATTACKING

The ability to counter-attack and block attacks will now be carried out with the same button. This is to stop players from 'turtling' – or playing insanely defensively.

04 COMPUTER COMBAT

The ability to lock on to your enemies manually has been removed. Instead the computer will take control of this function – hopefully this won't prove annoying.

05 FREE RUNNING REVAMPED

Free running is more fluid than before. It's not just buildings that are traversed this time around, with trees, rocks and the like all coming into play.

06 TOWER DEFENCE GONE

Assassin's Creed III will not feature any tower defence elements. This is good news as its introduction in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* was... unpopular, shall we say.

07 FAST TRAVEL IS IN

Rather than just having the ability to use transport, *ACIII* will feature fast travel. The devs reckon there will be a lot of travelling about, so it's a necessary addition.

08 MOST ACCESSIBLE YET

It's the traditional developer claim for a new game in a series, but it bears repeating: Ubisoft is aiming to make *ACIII* welcoming to newcomers while keeping it familiar to veterans.

09 KILL FROM THE TREES

The natural world isn't just there to be admired and climbed. Connor uses the natural world – the trees, rocks and so on – to help set up kills and attacks.

10 PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

An economic/trade system makes an appearance. Also making a comeback is the property development side attraction of previous titles.

11 BECOME NOTORIOUS

Notoriety will still feature in *Assassin's Creed III*, but it has been modified in certain ways. It won't be affected by simply exploring risky areas, for example.

12 FELLOW ASSASSINS HELP

Ubisoft has intimated there might be a system similar to the fellow assassins/team-mates game mechanic introduced into the series with *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*.

13 REPLAY THE BEST MISSIONS

Missions on *Assassin's Creed III*, now featuring checkpoints, can be replayed in order to earn yourself more XP. This leads to greater rewards for better performance.

14 FOUR-PLAYER CO-OP

Multplayer will exist in some form, though the details have yet to be revealed. Four-player co-op is being touted by many rumour-mongers.

15 NEW PUZZLE ELEMENTS

We were unconvinced by them, but elements similar to the first-person puzzle sections of *Revelations* will make an appearance. First-person *Peggle*?

16 JOIN THE HUNTING CLUB

A new element has been introduced in the shape of joinable clubs. The hunting club, for example, opens to players if they are prolific hunters. And quite posh. Possibly.

17 ASSASSINATE A BEAR

Wild animals can be hunted for resources, pelts and so on. The cleaner the kill, the better the reward – yes, you can effectively assassinate a grizzly bear.

18 WATCH FACTIONS BATTLE

Players will be able to be a part of huge battles between rival factions. Rather than watching from afar or in cut-scenes, players will be right in the middle of the action.

19 AGGRESSIVE COMBAT

Combat in *ACIII* has been modified to focus more on aggression than before. The system will take into account elements such as speed and momentum.

20 GUNS AND PISTOLS

Firearms are a big part of the era *Assassin's Creed III* is set in, but so far we only know Connor as having a single-shot pistol. It will be one of a few secondary weapons available. ➤

50 SHOCKING SECRETS...

WHY THE STORY WILL SHOCK YOU

21 THE BRITISH ARE BACK

The character of Shaun Hastings, offering a British view on the war, will be in the game. It's safe to assume this means Danny Wallace will be reprising his role.

22 AND SO IS DESMOND

It isn't just Connor and colonial-era America – Desmond's story, unsurprisingly, will continue in the modern world. Which means we'll likely hear Nolan North. Again.

23 NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Part of the game being set in New York ties in to what was seen at the end of *Revelations*. SPOILER: it's the location of the Grand Temple, where Desmond has to travel to try to save the world.

24 ASSASSINS AND TEMPLARS

For all the sidetracking, bringing in the Revolutionary War and suchlike, things still follow a very *Assassin's Creed* path. That is to say that underneath it all it is still the story of the Assassins and the Templars.

25 TYRANNY AND CORRUPTION

Main character Connor, raised in a Mohawk village, sees his childhood home burned to the ground by white colonists. He turns to a life of fighting tyranny and corruption in response.

26 WELCOME ANIMUS 3.0

The game's user interface – updated and improved upon from last time around – is explained in-story as being the Animus 3.0.



● Connor has a small one-shot pistol he can call upon in a pinch.

THE VIOLENT BATTLE FOR AUTHENTICITY

27 MASSIVE FIRES ARE RAGING

Grand historical events, like the great fire of New York, will play a part in *Assassin's Creed III*. Players won't just see them – they'll actually get to experience them, too.

28 GEORGE WASHINGTON IS IN

One historical figure players will encounter will be George Washington. The man was a Freemason in real life, which the AC series has linked to the Templars, so this could prove very interesting.

29 MEET THE BRITISH TRAITOR

The would-be commander in chief of the Continental ('American') Army, Charles Lee, is another person players will run into. He's a British turncoat – or is he? OR IS HE? (He is.)

30 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN IS IN

Connor will also encounter an ageing, though still active, Benjamin Franklin. He may fulfil the role Leonardo da Vinci held in *Assassin's Creed II*, with part of his CV being 'badass inventor'.

31 IT'S NOT THE CIVIL WAR

Assassin's Creed III is set during the American Revolutionary War and not the American Civil War as some have mistakenly suggested. So now you know.

32 THE EXACT YEAR REVEALED

While the game begins in the year 1753, it doesn't start at the same time as the war. Fighting began in earnest in 1776, ending in 1783 – the same year *Assassin's Creed III* ends. >

FRANCOIS PELLAND

Senior producer, *Assassin's Creed III*

It's the longest cycle of development for any of the AC games we've done since [the first]. Because we started so early, we wanted to have a very early alpha so we could take time to polish [it]



● There can now be thousands of people on screen, rather than hundreds.



—THE ANATOMY OF— CONNOR

CONNOR'S NATIVE AMERICAN NAME

In case it isn't already evident, Connor is the name our protagonist has as a result of his English heritage. Ratohnaké:ton (pronounced Ra-doon-ha-gay-doo), on the other hand, is a result of his Native American mother. Normally this would be the point where we explain what his Native name means, but we've lost our Mohawk dictionary. Connor, on the other hand, means Wolf Kin or Lover Of Wolves.

CONNOR'S UNIQUE HERITAGE

Connor is born of the union betwixt an English father and a Native American mother, making him something rather unique: a mixed race lead character in a videogame. It also sets up some interesting internal conflicts – the English and Mohawks (along with many other Native American tribes) fought on the same side *against* the Americans during the Revolutionary War. It's certainly a rather intriguing element.

Or Ratohnaké:ton,
if you want to be
more precise

THE TRAINED ASSASSIN

Every character needs a reason to do what they do, and Connor is no different. He was raised in a Mohawk village, living a life of relative obscurity, until white colonists – for some as-yet-unknown reason – attacked and burned down his home. Motivated by these events, Connor makes the decision that his life will now focus on fighting wrongdoers and tyranny. Also, quite interestingly, Ratohnaké:ton was not raised as an assassin, unlike the other main characters from the series.

KNIVES AND OTHER STABBING WEAPONS

Connor would be a terrible assassin if he wasn't armed, so it's good that he's... well, *armed*. Not only does Ratohnaké:ton sport the knife and tomahawk we've seen so much of in the game's trailer and artwork, he's also the proud owner of something no *Assassin's Creed* game would be complete without: the hidden blade. Then, of course, there are other secondary combat items, such as the one-shot pistol, the bow and a selection of yet-to-be-revealed weapons.



50 SHOCKING SECRETS...

PATRICE DÉSILETS

Creative director, *Assassin's Creed*/*Assassin's Creed II*/*Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*

Assassin's Creed is the story of one man reliving the lives of his ancestors. Altaïr was the middle of a very, very long timeline. There are still many places to explore. *Assassin's Creed* has always been planned to be a trilogy, and Desmond is going back in time, using the Animus to eventually become the ultimate assassin

HOW IT WILL PUSH PS3 TO BREAKING POINT

33 LONGEST DEVELOPMENT YET

This is the longest development cycle for an *Assassin's Creed* game since the original *AC* game. It has been in development for around three years now.

34 MONSTER BUDGET

The budget for the game's creation is twice that of *Revelations*. What that number is, we're not entirely sure – but it's likely to be big.

35 IT'S ALREADY FINISHED

The first version of *Assassin's Creed III* should have been completed by now. The development team is using the time before release to refine and perfect the experience.

36 UNCHARTED CUT-SCENES?

Cut-scenes take a step-up from previous games, this time using full performance capture. It's the same technique we see used in *Uncharted's* cut-scenes.

37 DWARVES BROTHERHOOD

The frontier – the countryside – map is approximately 1.5 times the size of the entire map of *Brotherhood*. In layman's terms: that's quite big.

38 THOUSANDS ON SCREEN

The last entry to the series was capable of putting about 100 people on screen at a single time. *ACIII* will be able to show a couple of thousand at once.

39 CHILDREN AND DOGS

There will be plenty of new interaction animations between NPCs but also new is the inclusion of children and dogs. Awww.

40 SCORCHING HOT ENGINE

The engine backing up the game – the Anvil engine – has been upgraded to AnvilNext. It has no version number we know of for handy reference, but Ubisoft says it's a huge leap in tech.

41 INCREDIBLY DETAILED FACES

New graphical technology and techniques make for far more detailed faces. It's not a huge change, but we're not going to argue with more detail.

42 BETTER TOWNS AND CAMPS

It's not just a graphical overhaul either. Detailing in the towns and encampments of *ACIII's* world has been improved a great deal.



Dense, lush forest bathed in light. Looks beautiful, right?





All in all,
Assassin's Creed
III will span 2,000
square miles

THE UNIQUE SETTING THAT MAKES THIS SPECIAL

43 THE 30-YEAR JOURNEY
The setting of *Assassin's Creed III* will take in the time from 1753 to 1783. The 30-year journey will follow Connor throughout, besides the bits where the game cuts to Desmond, obviously.

44 SIGNIFICANT REGIONS
Away from the main hubs will be smaller locations and towns such as Lexington and Concord. These regions still have a great deal of historical significance.

45 SEASONS WILL CHANGE
As the years progress, seasons will change. This affects not just the look of the world, but how those inhabiting it go about their business – also: frozen lakes!

46 WORLD SLOWLY CHANGES
The world itself changes as time passes and people move on, build or rebuild. A military encampment will become an abandoned field over time, for example.

47 OUT IN THE WILD
The frontier – the wilderness region – will play a big part in *Assassin's Creed III*. It will also not be as empty as the countryside regions in previous entries to the series.

48 BONJOUR LA FRANCE
The Americans will play a part in the story, unsurprisingly, along with the English. They will be joined by – at the very least – the French and Native Americans, too.

49 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL
Morality in *ACIII* isn't represented in a black and white fashion. This means it isn't just going to be a case of 'everyone is bad apart from the Americans', fortunately.

50 BOSTON AND NEW YORK
The main locations of the game will be Boston and New York. Both were very important flashpoints of the era. They may not be the only cities but we'll have to wait and see. ☒

ALEX HUTCHINSON

Creative director, *Assassin's Creed III*

Even people who are angry about something are still interested in your game and that's amazing. We listen, but even so you need a very strong, directed core. You need to make a core very early on in game development and stick with it regardless of what people say around you



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Lead Scriptwriter Matt Turner talks *Assassin's Creed III*, Red Dead comparisons and PlayStation 4

What would you say separates *Assassin's Creed III* from what essentially was *Assassin's Creed II: Part 2* and *Assassin's Creed II: Part 3*?

That's a tough one, because we went a long way to make everything different. I think one thing that separates it from all the *Assassin's Creeds*, not just those, is organic environments that are playable in 3D and are as immersive as the cities of the previous games. That's a huge difference.

What we've seen reminds us of *Red Dead Redemption* and also *MGS 4*, with its 'nowhere to hide' theme...

We're definitely aware of those games. *Red Dead* I would go so far as to say it was my favourite game of the last two or three years for sure. We had already had prototypes for the animal stuff before *Red Dead*...

Were you upset?

We were more like okay, okay. Here's the thing: Rockstar is a sensational company. If they're doing that too that means our ideas were in the right direction, take that as a positive. So we saw that and were like alright this does work, how can we make this better, and that's something that all good developers are always trying to do. Not be the same as, but take it to the next level. That was our reaction. They've had success, how can we take that success and build on it? So we focused on that. We're definitely aware of it, playing competitors' games. It was almost a validation that we were doing the right thing, and pushed us to make a better game.

As far as the *MGS 4* thing is concerned, we're taking a bit of a different approach

to it. We're aware it was there and we wanted to add our own *Assassin's* flavour to it and make it work in that environment specifically for us. We didn't want it to feel like anything else, we wanted it to feel like American Revolution, *Assassin's Creed*.

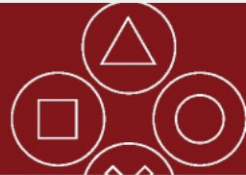
There must have been big pressure on *Assassin's Creed III* then because this is the sequel, a numbered game with a longer development cycle. The others were sideshows.

Those are full games, we wouldn't want to call them sideshows. *Brotherhood* and *Revelations* were good, full offerings for players that had their successes. But *Assassin's Creed III*, for us, we wanted to evolve from *ACII*. The core team from that game came onto this one straight after *ACII* finished. There was no gap.

Mostly engineers, so they were focused on pushing the tech forward from the very beginning.

So that start was all about redefining [AC], making something really fresh but also really challenging. The way that we broke that down: there are three pillars in *Assassin's Creed III*, which players associate with the brand: social stealth, navigation and combat. Those are the three things that AC is about, and as long as we focused on those things and evolve past that and expand we're going to have something that people will feel is AC, but also something new.

So there was pressure, but not pressure in a sense that 'oh, this is what we have to do', just 'this is what we're doing'. So we set ourselves that goal early on. I came on the project over two years ago.



● The ability to parkour over/around trees and rocks has been added.



● Interestingly, Connor isn't a trained assassin from birth



● While they play an antagonistic role, not all the Brits are baddies.



● When it all gets a bit too much, go kayaking!

What made you choose the setting? It has been rumoured for a while, along with Victorian London, although maybe that was just wishful thinking from the British press...

I get that! The design of Victorian London is a pretty wicked city to imagine.

But the Revolutionary War is such a big thing. Where did you even start?

That's a good one, man. How much time you got? (laughs) When I came on the team the decision to set it then had already been made so I wasn't in the discussion of the choice but I was privy to the reasons behind it. For us it's about what's happening in that period, you've got to think that it's not just the Revolution; it's before, during and after, with a slice of colonial life. The Revolution is a backdrop to our Assassins/Templar story that is the focus of all AC narratives.

We found that what was happening in that period in history was reflecting where the Assassins/Templar war had come to, so we were getting all of those wicked narrative parallels given to us and we thought that was too good of an opportunity to pass up.

Again, we wanted to start from the beginning and make everything fresh, a new take on *Assassin's Creed*. What that meant was that we started talking about organic environments, and when you start talking about colonial America you think about the frontier and that massive wilderness, which goes hand-in-hand with what we wanted to do in terms of pushing the assassin forward.

So with those two things, we're like: 'that's the right place to be. Now let's figure out exactly when this is going to take place.' And that conversation started happening at the same time as the character Connor, as we started to figure out who he was and what was driving him, when his life span would best be complemented by the history of what was going on. It's a back and forth discussion all the time: that's just games really.

Basically, we wanted to experience this person's life, and these are the dates that give us the best window to tell an interesting story about how this person came to be and what drives them as an assassin.

The process was long, and always changing. As we wrote a draft and had some missions and we were like this won't work and then we change it, which is always happening in games.

But what we've come to now is really solid and the character of Connor is complemented really well by what surrounds him and the time that he's alive. He bounces off these different events in his life that have different impacts on him. [We want] his character to become as important and likeable to players as Ezio,

who was a pretty crazy character, and successful as far as they go: big shoes to fill. We're very confident and hoping that Connor can fill them adequately.

Ezio's one of the few videogame characters that actually has a character. We're going to be completely honest: most game stories are terrible. A lot of the game stories that are held up as being amazing, if it were a Steven Seagal movie you'd be like 'nah'. (Matt laughs)

In terms of an overarching narrative *Assassin's Creed*, on the other hand, does everything quite well. That said, the Desmond sections ripped us right out of it. How do you balance the two narratives and make sure they don't jar?

It's a tricky balance. We're always working against [it not jarring]. At the same time a lot of people are really into the present story and how it's unfolding, so we have to respect that as well. The truth is that the present does give us this awesome meta goal for the whole thing rather than being a period piece, and some people get a little confused by it but we have these great layers to the story. Our first focus is to make sure that each layer moves forward at the right pace. The focus is the history; that's one standalone story. The present story has to move forward proportionally at that time. I can't say in this version you're going to see more of Desmond than you have before, but it's that balance, it has to feel like it's relevant, that you're doing it for a purpose, I think that's the trick. It's not as jarring if you think you've come out of the Animus for a reason, as opposed to, 'hi, now I'm here, walking around. Now I have to go pee!' That's what we've been trying to make sure is really clear to the player, the reasons for coming out of the Animus, that the present sections are grounded and motivated. As long as we have that as well we'll have a nice balance people can enjoy both [sections] and they can play off of each other a bit.

What would you want from new consoles for *Assassin's Creed IV*?

As far as where *Assassin's Creed* will go I really can't say... for me it's more than graphical fidelity. The idea of being connected all the time is a strong one, and I'd like to see that come through. Whether that translates into the games that come out I couldn't tell you. I would like gaming, and consoles to move beyond just being consoles. To have other functions and do them well... As far as what they're [Sony/Microsoft] doing I haven't the foggiest idea, but that's where I'd like to see it go. That would be great for *Assassin's Creed*. But as far as where it's going I don't know.

Install

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

GTA V COMING TO PS VITA

PS3's hottest game coming to handheld, say industry analysts

Sensational claims from retail sources suggest that the PS3 version of *GTA V* will be playable on Vita.

This shocking declaration was made by a member of staff at Gamestation, after Play had called to enquire about the possibility of a *GTA* title hitting the handheld.

"[Rockstar] hasn't said if the next *GTA* game will be Vita compatible," the sales assistant told us. "But there's no reason why it shouldn't be because essentially the Vitas are PS3s in the palm of your hand, so there's every chance it will be compatible."

Vita is powerful, no doubt, but not that powerful, surely? Stunned by this claim we contacted Rockstar and asked it to comment. As ever it responded that it does not comment on speculation, although the rep we spoke to laughed like a madman when we mentioned what we'd heard.

Crazy predictions aside, a *Grand Theft Auto* title on Vita would be a winner for all concerned. Rockstar released three *GTA* titles for PSP – *Liberty City Stories*, *Vice City Stories* and *Chinatown Wars* – and each was a sales success, while also helping to bolster the machine's reputation of replicating 'proper' console experiences.

"The *Grand Theft Auto* spin-offs on the PSP were a lodestone to the early success

“I am sure they will release *Grand Theft Auto* on Vita”

of Sony's first portable platform," industry analyst Jesse Divnich told us. "Regardless of the success of Vita, or whether market demands have shifted, on paper it makes absolute sense to eventually see a *GTA* on the PS Vita platform."

"Even with a potential smaller install base, any *Grand Theft Auto* spin-off is likely to have a strong enough reception to produce significant profits (and consumer enjoyment)."

Divnich isn't the only industry analyst backing *GTA* for Vita. Others, such as Michael Pachter, an analyst for Wedbush Morgan, agree that *GTA* will be headed to Vita, possibly sooner than we think.

"I am sure they will ultimately release a *GTA* game on Vita," Pachter told us. "It's hard to project when, and to know whether, they will make it a priority. Most likely it will be a 2013 event."

Indeed it's hard to see a future where Vita doesn't boast a *GTA* title. With the success of Rockstar's other excursions

onto handheld devices it's a financial no-brainer – *Liberty City Stories* alone sold 8 million copies – but we suspect that isn't Rockstar's sole incentive. The company has made its name breaking boundaries in both content and technology, creating massive, envelope-pushing worlds with the tech available to them.

Simply, the appeal of making the best game on PS Vita is too tempting for a company dedicated to making the world's best games. PS3 *Grand Theft Auto V* won't be playable on PS Vita – especially not on day one, that's absolute guff – but it would surprise no one if Rockstar created more '*Stories*' titles that use the same environment but feature new characters and arcs. With *Grand Theft Auto V* returning to Los Santos, is this also the reason why we didn't get *San Andreas Stories* on PSP?

Need To Know



BioWare defends *Mass Effect 3* ending

"I didn't want the game to be forgettable," explained producer Casey Hudson, "even right down to the sort of polarising reaction that the ends have had with people." Polarising means some fans liked the ending. Who are these people? Do they exist?



● *GTA* games have always sold well on handheld.

IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS



Soul Reaver reboot

Crystal Dynamics is said to be working on a 'reboot' of *Soul Reaver*, the second game in the *Legacy Of Kain* series. The studio, busy with *Tomb Raider*, is said to be looking at reviving a game that was originally released in 1996 for PlayStation. Let's hope so because it was pretty bloody good.



Ninja Gaiden 3 free DLC

It's sometimes easy to forget but publishers don't have to charge for DLC. Tecmo Koei remembers, and there's no charge for the deathclaw and scythe weapons. Given there's only one weapon available in *Ninja Gaiden 3* as it's sold at retail, wouldn't it have made more sense to include them in the actual game?



DC Universe big changes

Most games just get the one patch to fix the bit where you fall through Level 3. *DC Universe Online* is now moving onto its tenth update, which is the most for any PlayStation 3 game. The tenth update will fix bugs, the matchmaking, tweak the user interface and allow those with DLC to change the character background.



5 THINGS GTA VITA MUST HAVE

1. TOUCH SCREEN IMPLEMENTATION

Even the least imaginative integration is useful, as it could be a shortcut for selecting weapons.

2. SAVE GAME TRANSFERRING

Would only work if *Grand Theft Auto Vita* was a direct port of the PS3 version but how good would it be?

3. GPS AND CLOCK DATA INPUT

Basically, a way to transfer real-time weather and day/night cycles into your game. Woah.

4. TILT SENSOR 'MINI-GAMES'

Imagine keeping balance with your Vita when drunk (in-game, duh) or likewise. Should be fun, right?

5. NO COMPROMISE WHATSOEVER

It's the Vita. It's a beast of a machine. If anyone outside of Sony HQ will find out how to make it purr, it's Rockstar.

5 SECRETS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT TOMB RAIDER

We draw the latest gossip from global brand manager Karl Stewart...

1 BEWARE 'VERY HARD' TROPHIES

"We'll try to make some easy, some very hard. What they will be, right now, there is absolutely no way on this Earth that I know, because that doesn't happen until you have your game in a position where you can go in and play it and go, 'Oh, that's cool, let's make that really hard to get! That's a cool reward for doing that.' So although it's in the back of our heads, it's not something, at this stage, that we start planning out."

2 WHY THEY'VE BEEN WORRIINGLY QUIET

"There's a strategy behind everything we do. We don't just talk for the sake of it. It was very important to us that we time the announcement of our game, as well as the information that we reveal about our game, very strategically, so that we tell the story of re-imagining this character. Lara's been around for a very long time, and you cannot expect that you come out, 12 to 18 months before the game ships, and go, 'Ta-da, here she is, she's shipwrecked on an island,' and the next phase is, 'Oh, she's getting stronger,' and the next phase is, 'Oh, she's an action-adventure hero.' There has to be the right amount of time to allow everything to sink in, for people to understand what we're trying to achieve."

3 SPOILER ALERT!

"We will be very cautious about making sure that the names of the Trophies aren't spoilers. Because I think that is a very important thing. It's a bummer when you turn around and say... here's an example, it's probably a spoiler, but if you got an achievement in *Batman: Arkham City* for, say, 'The Death of Joker', you'd be like, 'Oh, no, that means he's gonna die!' Well, who the hell names an achievement that? Now, I know that Rocksteady did not give an achievement named 'The Death of Joker'. But that's a spoiler, that's a big deal."

4 LARA WILL LAST 20 YEARS

"When we went back to look at this new vision of Lara, obviously, we tried to make sure that we position the character in the future of the character. So we're not looking at a year, we're looking at the next 20-plus years, let's say, if she lasts that long. Obviously she will. We had to be very cognisant about dating our character."

5 LARA CROFT VS JAMES BOND?

"I know, in the past, we've had Lara's birthday as 14 February, it was Valentine's Day. For the life of me, I don't know who ever decided that. But really, there are certain personalities and certain things that... brings a level that starts to break down the fourth wall a little bit too much. You look at James Bond. I have studied it and looked it up. He doesn't have a birthday. Batman doesn't have a birthday. The Incredible Hulk doesn't have a birthday. So it's looking at characters and kind of going, 'What is the rationale for having a birthday?' So despite the fact that a lot of people will probably be a little bit peeved with us for not calling it out and saying, 'Hey, 14 February!', we look at it and kind of go, 'Does she need to have a birthday? Is it something that we need to bring to her personality?' And I think that the answer is no."

INSTANT EXPERT X

DARK SOULS SEQUEL?

From Software confirms the series will rumble onwards and upwards

WHAT WE WANT

MORE DARKNESS

Dark Souls had a bleak, oppressing atmosphere that made you feel alone. Good news then – that will likely continue. “We’ve always been enamoured by dark fantasy action RPGs,” said R&D head Masanori Takeuchi. “That’s just been our core DNA and I think we’ll continue to utilise that.”

NO DLC

Part of why *Dark Souls* was so well received is it resisted trends that have crept into videogaming this gen – patronising tutorials, excessive hand-holding, co-op everything and invasive DLC. From Software seems to be handling its DLC for *Dark Souls* with care but even so, *Dark Souls* itself felt like a finished, complete product. That is a Very Good Thing.

DEEPER COMBAT

It’s a woolly term and there’s clearly a delicate balance at play in *Dark Souls*, where your limited arsenal of moves means you have to fully understand everything at your disposal to get around the complex obstacles ahead. Even so, sprinkling in a few moves unique to each class shouldn’t hurt, and will help preserve the identity of each class at higher levels.

WHAT WE DON'T WANT

SOFTER DIFFICULTY

“The success of both *Demon's Souls* and *Dark Souls* has made us shift our thinking internally to not just core gamers, but to globalise our products, that they can be successful on a worldwide scale.” Globalise? Worldwide scale? Please don’t dumb down *Dark Souls* for the masses.

DIRECT SEQUEL

We’re using sequel because it’s quicker than explaining in full every time but *Dark Souls* wasn’t actually a direct sequel to *Demon's Souls*, in the usual sense. Rather, it was just a continuation of the series that was broadly similar (obviously) with a minimalistic plot that left much up to the player to interpret. So starting fresh is the obvious move.

SMARTPHONE SEQUEL

“As developers, we like to do new things and new challenges will help us mature and grow as a developer,” explains Nakajima. “Smartphones and tablets are an interesting challenge for us.” It’s never going to happen but if a *Dark Souls* sequel misses Sony’s console in favour of smartphones we’ll cry tears of blood for the next three millennia.

WORLD'S WEIRDEST GAME HITS PS3

Exclusive director's cut of *Deadly Premonition* is in the works for Sony's console. So what's it all about?



MURDER INVESTIGATION

Deadly Premonition is a game where you play FBI agent Francis York Morgan, investigating the murder of Anna Graham. It has never seen the light of day on Sony consoles outside of Japan, which is a shame as it's... weird. Very, very weird.



IT'S BORDERLINE BROKEN

It's an open-world survival-horror game with awful controls and pacing but also the strangest dialogue, oddest characters and catchiest theme tune. It's compelling with both how awful and endearing it is. Imagine a dinosaur drinking coffee in the sea. That makes more sense than this.



YORK TALKS TO HIMSELF

The most famous meme to come from *Deadly Premonition* is Zach, the alter-ego Francis York talks to by holding his ear and openly chatting to himself. He talks to Zach about movies, people he meets and how he feels. At no point in the game does anyone mention how strange this is.



CUT-SCENES ABOUT SANDWICHES

It also has five-minute cut-scenes about Francis York eating sandwiches, flies that buzz around him if he doesn't wash every day and the gas mask-wearing Harry Stewart who speaks through his assistant, his assistant ending all relayed dialogue with “So says Mr Stewart”.

IT'S JUST WEIRD

It's hard explaining the appeal of a mechanically awful and almost broken game. Yet it's so bizarre that it piques your interest and the moments of farcical comedy are made funnier as you're never sure if they're deliberate or not. Example: whenever York grins. Look at him. LOOK.



This explains why *Deadly Premonition* received review scores ranging from 2/10 to 10/10, the average score being around 70%. It has become a cult classic on Xbox 360, where it was released over here, and now we're getting the best version. So says Mr Stewart.

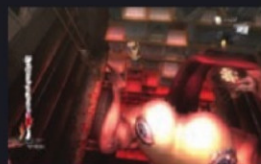
THE HARDEST GAMES EVER

If the challenge of *Dark Souls* didn't make you sprout a beard of manliness (and that goes for both sexes) then give these a try...



BAYONETTA

It's not all that taxing on a normal runthrough providing your eyes work and you know how to hold a PlayStation 3 pad. Crank the difficulty up to its hardest setting and watch as your world dissolves in a miserable cocktail of tears, blood, sweat and pad grease.



CATHERINE

It starts off gentle, then it remembers it's *Catherine* and the difficulty goes haywire. The only thing the boss stages are missing is a giant trollface in the background to remind you that *Catherine* exists solely to make you hurt. Mentally. Physically. Spiritually. Sexually?



MEGA MAN 9

We could blab on about 'retro goodness' and bust out a 'pixel perfect' reference but no. It's too hard. We have no joy left for this one. Unlocking a single Trophy in *Mega Man 9* feels like an achievement for man on a par with curing cancer, or discovering fire.



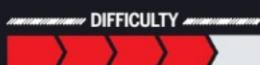
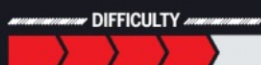
NINJA GAIDEN 2

It's the sort of game you begin playing on Thursday night and then wake up at some indiscriminate point on Friday afternoon with blood stains on your shirt, four teeth in your pad, your foot through the TV and part of the wall missing.



DEMON'S SOULS

The only PS3 game harder than *Dark Souls*. Which is a bit like saying hey, it's the only mountain in the world higher than the Everest. The human mind is not built to imagine such a thing. Pure evil pumped straight from the arse of Satan in disc form.



INSTALL

SAD ENDINGS THAT WORK

There has been a lot of discussion about endings in Videogame Land recently, and here are the best 'sad' endings.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

WHAT HAPPENS: Marston thinks he's escaped a life of lawlessness and crime but it catches up with him in a final, fatal showdown. We then play as his son, who treads the same path of vengeance his father fought so hard to get away from.

WHY IT'S GOOD: The message here is that your past will always catch up with you. Depressing but powerful, it's a stunning, bittersweet ending.



FINAL FANTASY X

WHAT HAPPENS: Midway through the game, Tidus reveals he'll disappear as he is only a dream created by the fayth to rid the world of Sin. Sin is eventually defeated and Tidus gives Yuna a tearful farewell as he fades from existence.

WHY IT WORKS: You realise you're not just saving the world but actively getting rid of your own character by doing so. The tribute by Yuna adds to the poignancy.



SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

WHY IT'S GOOD: You're killing colossi to bring Mono back but as part of that you're also reviving Dormin, a spirit who has been locked away to protect the world. The ending has you suffering a death similar to the colossi you've slain.

WHY IT WORKS: You think you're being virtuous by reviving Mono but the slow reveal that Dormin is manipulating you into killing the colossi is brilliant.



NIE R

WHY IT'S GOOD: New Game+ gives you the ability to understand what the Shades say. Portrayed as evil adversaries in your initial run, the second playthrough shows a completely different side to them.

WHY IT WORKS: The Shades aren't evil as they're protecting their friends but this only becomes apparent after you've completed the game.



“ If it ain't broke, don't fix it – but if it is, you might want to look at making some changes ”

DEAD SPACE 3: THROUGH HIS EYES

Controversial shift to FPS being talked up

ALL ABOARD the rumour mills ladies and gentlemen (and animals) because we're hearing the next instalment of *Dead Space*, the third main entry from Visceral Games, might well be played out from a first-person perspective. It's not confirmed in any way, shape or form, this once third-person shooter-cum-horror game could go the way of the most popular genre in the world and 'do a *Doom*' on us.

The rumours have popped up as a result of a job listing on EA's corporate website, asking for an experienced multiplayer developer who is also an

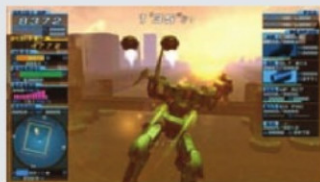
'avid FPS gamer' to stake their claim to a desk in Visceral's Redwood City office. Surefire confirmation *Dead Space 3* will be an FPS? Maybe not.

See, EA is also looking at Visceral to expand the series beyond its third-person shooter roots – we've seen the additions to the series in the movies and spin-offs like *Ignition* and *Extraction*, so it's likely to be a part of that kind of planning. But there are no definites here right now, and the *Dead Space* series – while doing well – hasn't been doing as well as EA clearly wants it to do. If it ain't broke, don't fix it – but

if it is, you might want to look at making some changes.

Do we think EA would ask for this change? That's a possibility. Do we think Visceral would want to make *Dead Space 3* an FPS? Absolutely not. But do we think it would be a good idea? For a spin-off, maybe – but for an entry to the main series, absolutely not. It doesn't make sense, it would ruin the sense of character, of setting, established by the previous two games and, we fear, it would make things less scary. FPS horror can work, but it shouldn't be hastily introduced via *Dead Space 3*.

FOUR TERRIBLE GENRE CHANGES



ARMORED CORE: FORMULA FRONT

> PSP > 2006

> **From:** Third-person action

> **To:** Management sim

The change in genre here was such a shock to players expecting to be able to directly control their giant stompy robots, that From Software actually changed the game for its US/EU release to allow direct control of the mecha. Not only was it a mistake – it was acknowledged as one, too.



DEATH BY DEGREES

> PS2 > 2005

> **From:** One-on-one fighting

> **To:** Scrolling beat-'em-up
Tekken was flying high, smacking all comers across the face with King, Jack, Heihachi and co's fantastic arcade and home console brawling. So why not spread your wings and turn it into a single-character scrolling beat-'em-up? Well, probably because you'll get it completely wrong and ruin Nina Williams' reputation for years to come, *NAMCO*.

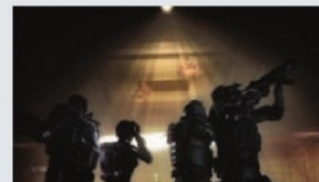


BOMBERMAN: ACT ZERO

> Xbox 360 (sorry) > 2006

> **From:** Arcade/party game

> **To:** Horrible, horrible thing
Bomberman is a legendary series and still, to this day, it offers some of the best multiplayer fun out there. Then, for some unknown reason, the developers decided it would be a good idea to turn it into a gritty, violent, third-person... thing. It was hideous. A truly terrible game. It didn't come to PlayStation, and for that we're eternally grateful.



RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY

> PS3 > 2012

> **From:** Survival horror

> **To:** Squad-based shooter

On first hearing about *Operation Raccoon City* we were nervous, but remained hopeful. It was a spin-off taking the series in a new, online-focused direction that could bring something new and interesting to the series. Instead it ended up being a terrible game and little more than a bad *SOCOM* game reskinned.

HONO[U]RING THE PATRIOTS

Controversy for controversy's sake, or something more?



YOU KNOW THE headlines before they've even been written, screaming their frothy-mouthed fury in the direction of any and all about how *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter* and *Rainbow Six: Patriots* are overstepping a mark; about how they're corrupting the youth of today and turning them all into violent psychopaths or terrorist-wannabes, or how it's training them to be better killers.

It happens every time, but it happens more when the games actually go a bit further than the usual fare and try to cover things a bit more, shall we say, controversial.

And you can almost see the point, beyond the reddened, mad eyes and the barking rhetoric of the *Daily Mail* reader – these are *games*, and they're starting to 'humanise' conflict, in the case of *MOH*, or cover domestic terrorism, in the case of *Rainbow Six*. Surely games aren't a mature enough medium to cover such angles; to talk about such subjects?

To be honest, that's how I thought I felt about it before I played 2010's *Medal Of Honor* reboot. I met producer Greg Goodrich before the game's release and chatted to him, and he almost – almost – convinced me to go against my innate desire to question the whys and hows of EALA's choice to 'humanise' the soldiers and their conflict.

Then I played the game and I realised... it's not that bad. It's over the top, it near-deifies the Tier One operative and it could very easily be construed as pro-US propaganda. But all things considered it's handled pretty well. The story, forgettable as it is, ends poignantly – the slow, protracted death of player character Rabbit played out in a first-person perspective brings some pathos to what is usually a distinctly bravado-heavy genre.

It's a war game – an action game. But it's one that shows for a demonstrable fact that something else can come from the modern conflict FPS games we see every ten minutes. And it's carrying on with *Warfighter*, this year's upcoming sequel, as we're going to see even more of the Real Life world of the soldiers involved.

Then there's *Patriots* – the latest Tom Clancy-monikered title from Ubisoft – and its story of domestic terrorism in the wake of the world economic crash. I don't know what the story will be like, or how it will paint these home-grown bad guys, but if there's even a slight chance we'll see a game treat the good guys and bad bastards with shades of grey rather than just "them be foreigners, shoot them", I'm open to it. I welcome it.

Done right, they could combine to take videogaming to a new level of depth in storytelling. Done wrong, they'll just be more ignorable man-shooters.

The Evening Fail

Thursday 22nd March 40p



VILLAGE BANS DUDEBRO CANNON 5000 – PAGE 78

BAN THESE SICK, TWISTED GAMES



EXCLUSIVE BY STUART REPORTER

Evil games will make milk go off in your fridge and increase chances of accidentally summoning a dragon, claims a top professor.

Chris Dungeon, Professor of Violence at Barnet University, has added to the growing pressure to ban evil videogames following results of his two-minute study.

"Videogames have gotten away with too much for too long," explained Dungeon. "The milk thing is bad enough but play online and you'll notice many American youths referring to you as a British cigarette. What is this bizarre subculture? It's absolutely terrifying."

Dudebro Cannon 5000 has already been banned by five retailers, with *Witch-Hunt The Sorcerer* also coming under scrutiny after Dungeon also claimed prolonged periods of play increase the chances of gamers accidentally summoning a dragon.

YOUR SHOUT

Play readers have their say

TEKKEN TAG 2 TOURNAMENT 2

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CONOR GARRATT

I used to play *Tekken Tag* with my friends. Whenever someone said "tag, you're it", they'd get a massive punch in the face.

DANIEL GOUGH

It's been 12 years since the first, and I have to say it's about bloody time.

KEVIN WILLIAM SMITH

I just stick to retro fighting games like *Mortal Kombat*, *Street Fighter* or *Virtua Fighter*. Only modern day fighter I do like is *SoulCalibur* but even they are getting crappy gameplay wise :/

OLLY MCCULLY

Always thought *SoulCalibur* was better than *Tekken* :D

LEE HEATHER

Tekken Tag was one of, if not the best fighting game on the PS2. Hopefully for the amount of time it's taken to make *TTT2* it will be bigger and better in many ways with cut-scenes at the end of clearing arcade mode and not the crappy ones *TT* had.

YouTube
youtube.com/PlayMagUK

Watching this one-minute trailer is much better than the live two-hour ugly movie.

FREDACER

Kazuya is badass these days. He recieved a much-needed update when *Tekken 4* hit the shelves, despite the game itself leaving much to be desired.

I think I was most pleased with the updates for Kazuya and Jin, much because of their new voices; it suits them wonderfully.

THEPROUDONE

Hell yeah... Lili and Asuka is my team...

REDX916

twitter
twitter.com/PlayMag_UK

@PAULDURIE

Tag Tekkens are the best. All one of them.

@SUPERMARIOEX

Tekken Tag Tournament is good game. Me love it long time.

@HANKBIZZLE

The original *Tekken* was the reason I got a PSone instead of a Saturn. So it's safe to say I'm a fan and looking forward to *TTT2*.

@MRCONORWICKHAM

Why are they playing tag in *Tekken*? WTF

@DAVIDP1985

It will be a million times better than *Tekken Tag* for sure :D

@XPERIAHUSKY

I haven't cared about *Tekken* since *Tekken 3*.



Play Online

If you want to talk to us, you can come to Bournemouth and find us browsing the finest clothes in TK Maxx on Saturdays or hit up [facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK](https://www.facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK), [@PlayMag_UK](https://twitter.com/PlayMag_UK) or [youtube.com/playmagUK](https://www.youtube.com/playmagUK)



CRYSIS 3

WHAT NEEDS FIXING

Five problems sequel must address

1 FIX THE AI

Crisis 2's biggest downfall was that your enemies were outrageously dim-witted. This wouldn't matter in most FPSs, but *Crisis* seems to think that it's a tactical shooter, and as such your enemies need to be smart. It's no fun to carefully plan an assault on an alien outpost and find them all sitting around looking at the floor. Sort it out.

2 MAKE IT AN ACTUAL OPEN WORLD

Due to the restraints of the current consoles *Crisis* went from being a massive open-world game into a linear shooter. Let's reverse that trend: we're not asking for the same level of freedom as the original – a gigantic tropical jungle might be too much – just something more substantial than 'walk in a straight line, shoot some stupid dudes.'

3 STOP THE HANDHOLDING

Hey, publishers: we've played games before. We know how to use our abilities. We don't need you telling us all the time. And we certainly don't need you pointing out, in massive letters, the best tactics for getting through a level: we'd like to figure that one out for ourselves. It's not fun, so stop doing it. And stop telling us how to crouch. We know.

4 WRITE A BETTER STORY

Before the release of *Crisis 2* there was a big noise made about the fact that it was written by Richard Morgan, a respected sci-fi author. Morgan even mouthed off about how he thought other sci-fi games' stories were bullshit. Then we played *Crisis 2* and realised his was, too. Come on people, it can't be that hard.

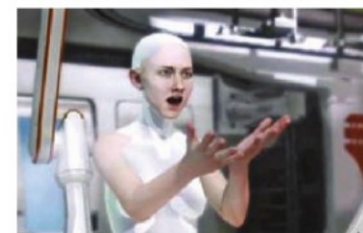
5 IMPROVE MULTIPLAYER

Crisis 2's multiplayer was filler: alright for a quick blast, but utterly forgettable. Next time we'd like to see more objective-based gameplay that takes advantage of the suit: sneaking into an enemy stronghold and escaping unseen, heat vision counter-sniping, that sort of thing. Maybe a team of soldiers not armed with the suit versus one guy with it? Anything other than straight-up run-'n'-gun please, Crytek.



Project Kara

What the Heavy Rain studio did next



QUANTIC DREAM'S LATEST

project may not be officially announced yet, but the studio has released a 'Project Kara' tech demo, starring *Twilight* actress Valorie Curry as a robot servant/sex slave being assembled on a production line. It's not part of a project that Quantic Dreams is currently working on but as a tech demo, it doesn't show us anything new either.

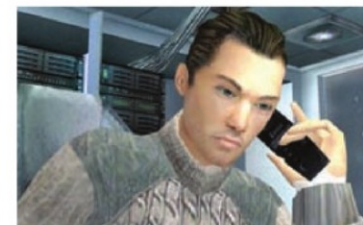
David Cage is big on full body performance, believing *LA Noire* to be a 'dead end' as it can't capture face and body performances. Project Kara shows off what he's talking about but ultimately, we've seen it before in *Heavy Rain*.

So what's there to be gleaned from Project Kara? Besides improved writing, not much. The waiting game continues, then...

PREVIOUS GAMES

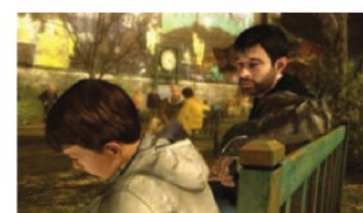
Fahrenheit (2005)

You played both killer and investigator in a story-driven mystery that ended with Aunt Agatha turning into a yellow AI robot from the future. Seriously.



Heavy Rain (2010)

Ethan Mars tries to find his son, whose disappearance is believed to be tied in with the recent 'Origami Killer' murders. Also: Jason! Jason! Jason! Jason!



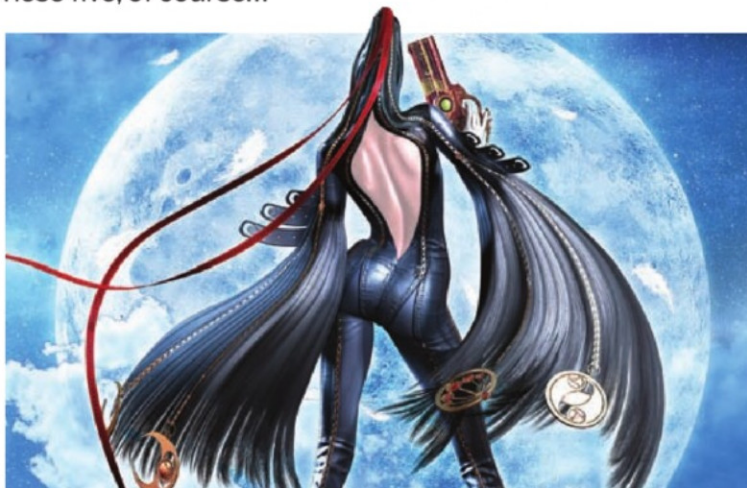
TOP 5

GAMES THAT PS VITA NEEDS RIGHT NOW

PS Vita has got off to a good start thanks to the combination of sexy technology and a fresh line-up of games. What announcements should happen to keep the momentum going? These five, of course...

1 GRAND THEFT AUTO

We've already covered the rumours on page 16 and make no mistake, Vita is powerful enough to run a monster *Grand Theft Auto* outing while still having processors free to work out what came first, the chicken or the egg. We think that's how technology works. Either way, *GTA* on Vita would give it a massive advantage over 3DS.



2 BAYONETTA/VANQUISH

Or any of the Platinum dust-offs, as Platinum does them so well. The score attack nature and short levels offers plenty of replay value. Plus they'd look so sexy on Vita's screen! You'd lick your Vita with your hot, steamy tongue. People will look at you. But you'd be happy.



4 TIMESPLITTERS

If Vita needs a breakout FPS to show off how well it can support the genre, *TimeSplitters* should step up and smash it out the park! The metaphorical problem of Vita needing a breakout FPS, we mean. Not smashing the actual Vita. Jesus, where are we going with this. Sorry.



5 FINAL FANTASY

Yes, we know, Vita is getting *Final Fantasy X HD* but slapping glossy make-up on a decaying RPG isn't what Vita needs. Create a new *Final Fantasy* that adheres to the old rules of the series (turn-based, NPC interaction, fantasy, set classes) and make it look spectacular.



3 BURNOUT

If you want to combine tight, snappy replay value powered by score attacks with the sheer eye-porn of cars crunching into each other in a shower of metallic sparks and broken glass, *Burnout* ticks so many boxes on the make-this-for-Vita-now-oh-my-God-hurry-up list, we're actually expecting it to never happen. It almost makes too much sense.

twitterwatch



@PrettyLarceny
Let me say this about *Mass Effect 3*. BioWare has "core fantasy" on speed dial.

@PlayMag_UK says:
BioShock Infinite's art director pays lip service to BioWare's sci-fi epic. It's always nice to see game developers enthusing about other games. We're still going to check back to see his Twitter once he's completed it, though...

TEAM PICKS

Games we want – nay, DEMAND – to see on Vita



ANDY SKYRIM

Because *Skyrim* is the greatest videogame in the world. Nothing will ever top it. The future of the games industry is different ways we can play *Skyrim*. *Skyrim*. *Skyrim*. *Skyrim*. I love *Skyrim*.



STEVE PRO EVO

Okay, so *PES* will probably never reach the heights of last generation. Not a problem: simply port *PES 6*, the best football game ever, to Vita with a bit of an HD facelift and we'll all live happily ever after.



DAN NBA 2K

My love for tough hardcore tactical Japanese RPGs is well known but even I hold my hands up and admit while *Suikoden II* might be the game Vita deserves, it's not the game Vita needs. So give us *NBA 2K12*. Now.



RYAN SHENMUE HD

It has already cost Sega 4 trillion Bison Dollars or however much it was, so all it needs to do now is click the Make Everything HD box, put it on a Vita cartridge and it would be guaranteed at least one whole sale.

THE ANATOMY OF... RESIDENT EVIL 6's LEON S KENNEDY

The star of *Resident Evil 2*, *4* and *6*, Leon S Kennedy has evolved from a rookie cop to a badass secret agent. Despite this, we still think that he's a bit... off. A bit wrong. A bit *awkward*. We're not sure why. It's probably the hair, though

TRULY AWFUL HAIR

There's no getting around it: Leon Kennedy's hair is rubbish. Look at it. In *Resident Evil 2* it looked like he tried to get all of the Backstreet Boys' haircuts onto one head. Now it's slightly more respectable, as it's more parted to the side, but we're still not convinced that any man with that hair would ever be trusted to save the world. That said, the meticulous nature of said parting points to a calm attention to detail. So there is that at the very least.

LEATHER JACKET

Despite the style mishaps that have fallen on his hair, Leon has proven that he can at least dress himself better as time goes on. After turning up in *Resident Evil 2* wearing a child's policeman costume, he was far better turned out in *Resi 4*, rocking a bitching leather and sheepskin jacket. Granted, this made him look like the illegitimate son of Ron Atkinson and a cow, but whatever. It showed he was, like the game, ahead of the curve: what was Tom Cruise wearing in the *War Of The Worlds* movie that released later that year? A leather jacket. POINT PROVEN.

WORLD'S BEST KNIFE-FIGHTER

If there's one thing that defines Leon, it's that he was designed in the Nineties, when *Titanic* was eating all the world's money and hair was something used to threaten those around you. If there is a second thing, it's that he's the world's greatest knife-fighter. Seriously: when a blade is drawn in *Resident Evil 4* the game becomes roughly 2,174% better, which is strange because perfect apparently can't be bettered. That's how good it is. The knife fight with Krauser is the world's greatest ever QTE, and when he throws the blade through Salazar's hand? Priceless. Well done Leo(n).

LEGS TO KICK

Leon's hair and clothes may get a lot of attention, but he'd be nothing without his legs. Not only because he needs them to, erm, walk, but because he spends so much time kicking things down/open with them. In all seriousness: any given playthrough of *Resident Evil 4* contains more kicks than an entire Premier League season, even the ones when Roy Keane was playing. Doors, enemies, enemy doors: nothing is safe from the fiery boot of Di Caprio-head himself. We just wonder what his insurance bill is like when he finally gets home.

FASHION FOCUS

Here it is, the first ever outfit Leon wore. Oh dear. Leon turned up for his first day of work wearing something he picked up in a Brighton fancy dress shop, which probably would have been a little embarrassing if everyone hadn't been eaten by zombies by the time he got there and lost the capacity to laugh. He really lucked out there.



Complete certain conditions in *RE2* – which include shooting one of STARS' finest in the face a few times, because eff that guy – and you'll be given a key to the locker room closet to change Leon's clothes. Finally, we can get out of this stupid outfit. Hey, this one's not too bad. Sweet.



And then there's this bad boy, which is even worse than the default outfit and makes us ask serious questions about Leon's candidacy for douchebag of the year. Look at that nonsense: he looks like he invented *Jersey Shore*.



By *Resident Evil 4*, Leon's grown up and actually decided that not looking like a complete toolbox might be something worth pursuing. Here he is adopting the Thirties gangster vibe, and we must say he looks pretty cool.



EMBARRASSMENT RATING:



EMBARRASSMENT RATING:



EMBARRASSMENT RATING:



EMBARRASSMENT RATING:



RE:PLAY

A truly bizarre mailbox this month as the subjects of murder, electrocution and a society gone mad on violent games rear their ugly heads. We rise above the madness to bring you these transcripts of a world gone wrong

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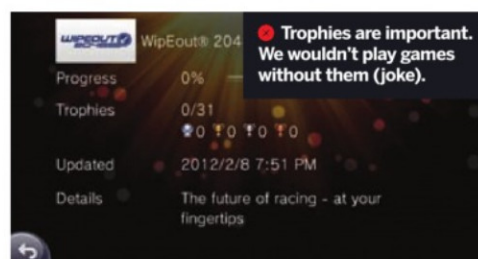
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Mental A-Trophy

I was reading *Play* and I noticed you wanted to hear about Trophies. I think Trophies are essential. They are so much fun to collect, every time I get one I feel a sense of accomplishment. I even have a friend who only buys games for Trophies.

Yours sincerely, loyal fan
Luke Nulty, Via email

We agree that the feeling of satisfaction you get when collecting a Trophy is immense. And yes, they are important: remember the



uproar when it became apparent that *MGS 4* wasn't going to be patched to include Trophy support? That said, we're not sold on the idea of playing games just for Trophies. We love that the system rewards and it encourages extended play and repeat sessions, but come on, who really cares enough to buy *Terminator Salvation* for the mega-easy Platinum it offers? Not us. Apart from Ryan. And Steve. Ahem.

Angriest letter ever

Dear *Play*,

I'm not going to rant today. I'm going to discuss a serious matter with you: fanboys. They come in all shapes and sizes; PCs and Macs; 'Call Of Battles' and 'Battle Dutys' (I'd rather not have a raving flock of *COD* or *BF* fanboys attack me); PlayStations and Xboxes. The list is endless, for everything you like there's going to be a fanboy that hates its existence. But why? What is it in their minds



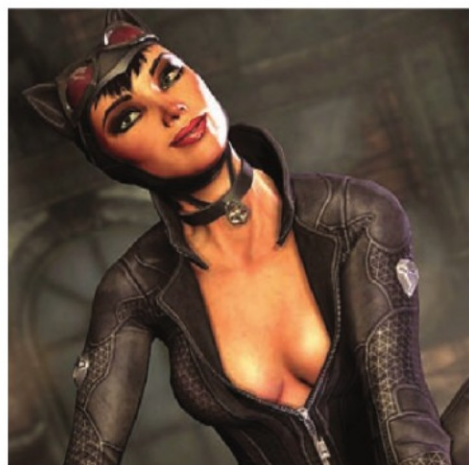
that tells them, 'He likes something that you don't like = ATTACK!!!!!!!!!!!!!!'? Why do people do this? Can they not just say, 'I like 'X' and they like 'Y', so let's enjoy our 'X's and 'Y's'? No, they have to say, 'I like 'X' so I deserve to die and have no place on this planet.' But what's the bloody point? What is terrorising me until I transfer to 'Y' going to do? Fanboys can get really serious sometimes, though.

Remember the massive PlayStation Network outage of 2011? Yeah, don't cry, don't cry. It happened, we're all okay now. Well what did Xbox fanboys do during that outage? They liked every PlayStation page on Facebook, then went on and on about how our credit card details were getting stolen. Why would you wish such tragedy upon people who only like something that you don't? What good did it do? It's just ridiculous. And it'll only get worse – like everything else in today's society – because that wouldn't have happened back in the days of Sega versus Nintendo, for example. Sega would take small funny stabs at Nintendo and vice versa. But nowadays, a PlayStation fanboy would grab a knife and stab an Xbox fanboy to death and vice versa. My opinion: SHOOT THEM ALL. Just something to think about. So think and give me your damn opinions right this second!

Sincerely, your adoring fan,
Justin Kittle, Via email

Agreed.

THE BIG ISSUE BIG BOOBS IN GAMES = BAD?



Hi *Play*! It has come to my attention that it has been mainly males writing in. Although it seems gaming is a 'guy thing', I disagree. I know many girls who all enjoy playing *COD* and more, and none of them are tomboys, so I find it insulting when some games (I'm looking at you *Duke*) make female characters sex objects. That got me thinking, maybe the reason why games haven't been COMPLETELY accepted into mainstream culture is because this still makes some people think gamers are middle-aged guys living in their mum's basement. I wondered what you guys think on the whole women thing in games?

Rebecca Reynolds, Via email

We agree. Being treated like horny teenagers is as embarrassing to guys as it is offensive to girls. Great female characters exist – Lara Croft, Alyx Vance, Jill Valentine – so it can be done but the big boobs = sales thing is a bit... easy for marketing departments. What does everyone else think?

Things you may have missed on our YouTube page



**BIOSHOCK INFINITE:
THE HANDYMAN**



**DEAD OR ALIVE 5:
FEMALE FIGHTERS**



**LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW:
VOICES TRAILER**

You Tube
www.youtube.com/
PlayMagUK



Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of Bethesda. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of *Fallout: New Vegas – Ultimate Edition*, which is available NOW for PS3 (£29.99). Age verification is required.

STAR LETTER

● This is all totally fine, right? RIGHT?



VIOLENCE, BLOOD & SEX

Most games released these days are 16+. Why do people crave only violence and blood? Is this real gaming? My answer is 'NO'. You don't need lots of blood to make a game great, and certainly not zombies. It makes me sad when I see most games circle around the same idea: killing.

Games were made to entertain people. I miss the games that require brain and skills to complete, such as *Mario* and *Sonic*. I have to laugh at people who complain about how hard a puzzle is. I'm sure it's more satisfying when you complete *Super Mario* than making 1 million headshots. Nowadays if a game doesn't contain violence, blood or sex then no one will buy it, so the companies make games about these topics. Is this the future we wanted? The games that truly make everyone happy no longer

exist. I'd hate to see in ten years' time kids run around shouting "All Zombies Must Die!"
Jing Qiu, Via email

But people like shooting things, Jing. We agree with you that publishers aping each other constantly isn't doing the industry any good, but you can't deny the allure that Man Shooting has to many, including casual gamers. Stress-relief, competition, vicarious wish fulfilment, no matter how deranged that sounds – it's all there at the end of a digital gun. We certainly hope that in ten years' time we're all still not playing the same games but with a '9' on the end, but there's a sneaking suspicion we probably will. For your concern, however, please have a copy of a game where you shoot people's heads off. A LOT.

facebook

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We take to our Facebook army made up of our nearest and dearest to ask...



Play

What games do you want to see on Vita next?

Like • Comment • Share • about an hour ago •

TONY SKELTON I know I go on about it but a REAL *Syndicate* game! Even a small flash game.

GABBY WILLIAMS *Portal 2*!

TOM MCNICHOL *inFamous* and *The Sims*!

BRADLEY ALEXANDER FISHER A *Dead Space* spin-off about what happened to Ellie before she met up with Isaac.

JAMIE GREEN Can't quite afford one yet so I'm concentrating on upcoming PS3 games like *Far Cry* and *Max Payne*. And *Hitman* obviously lol

THOMAS DAVIS The next *Hitman* game. A handheld is what this series has been waiting for! Naughty Dog could make *Uncharted*, so IO can make *Hitman*.

ALI MCAULEY *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield 3*. Also *Assassin's Creed* would be good.

JUSTIN KITTLE *Sim City* and *The Sims*. Something to hold a candle to Nintendo's might that is... *Animal Crossing*.



LEGO BATMAN 2 – DC SUPER HEROES: DEBUT TRAILER



SLEEPING DOGS: UNDERCOVER TRAILER



MASS EFFECT 3: MULTIPLAYER STRATEGY



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Forum

Got something to talk about? Tell us on our forum: www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



Podcast

The **Play** team talks games every month
nowgamer.com/podcasts/nowgamer-podcasts/

FPS games are boring

Everyone moans that everyone is boring when it comes to FPS games because "everyone who buys *COD* is an idiot" and supposedly *Battlefield* is "a man's game". So when it comes to a new FPS that isn't *COD* or *Battlefield* (I'll take *Medal Of Honor* for example), you would think because everyone wants 'change' they would buy a different franchise within the FPS genre. It only makes sense. Bored of current franchises = buy a new FPS franchise (I know *Medal Of Honor* isn't a new franchise but the reboot on the latest generation could be considered new). But when a new FPS does come out it gets ripped apart by everyone for simply NOT being *Call Of Duty* or *Battlefield*. And because these new games are not *COD* or *Battlefield* they get bad publicity by the majority of people who laugh at them and go on about how bad it is and if it's not *Call Of Duty* or *Battlefield* then it's guaranteed to be crap and therefore the games trying to make a name for themselves get shadowed by the negative press about them for again not being *COD* or *Battlefield*. Sad



really. I chose *COD* and *Battlefield* as they are the two biggest multiplatform FPS games.

Thanks for reading,
Adam Cracknell

The problem with *Medal Of Honor* (and *Homefront*, we suppose) is that by trying so hard to ape *Call Of Duty*,

it invites comparison to those games, too. No one criticised *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* or *BioShock* for not being *Call Of Duty* or *Battlefield*, because they weren't trying to imitate them. If anyone is bored of FPS games, give them a try – the genre offers much, much more than military me-too shooters.

twitter

YOU ASK PLAY

www.twitter.com/PlayMag_UK



It's that time of the month again! Even though it's the first time we've done this. Ask us questions on Twitter – you can find us @PlayMag_UK

@SKITTLE_SACK Should I get a new PS3 Slim to take to uni with me this year or a PS Vita? Considering they're both around £230...

PS Vita. Not a pain to move around, games can be enjoyed in short bursts (less time at uni... if you're studying hard, ahem), online is a bigger factor with PS3, and broadband speeds at uni can be... temperamental.

@KILLERAPP_SAM Which game would you recommend playing while listening to *The Very Best Of Todd Rundgren?*

Dead Space.

@METALPAUL1000 Shall I get *Street Fighter X Tekken* on PS3 or PS Vita?

PS3 for the online competition and arcade stick compatibility. Vita version is ages away.

@ALKOGNIUZZ *Twisted Metal*: to buy or not to buy?

Hmmm. If you play online and put the time in, then yes. Otherwise it's a bit *Twisted Meh*.

@ITALIANICK84 I've heard rumours of a *Baldur's Gate* sequel. Do you think it could come to PS3?

If it is announced, almost certainly – *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II* was a console release, so this one should be as well.

@BAKURYOKUSO Any thoughts on the upcoming *Doctor Who* game, y'all being British and all?

Not too hopeful, and that's with us having just wolfed down fish and chips and having finished off a nice glass of Robinson's Squash, being the massively patriotic, flag-waving, hanky-on-head Brits we are.

@DAVEFILMFAN What would you recommend, as my memory in old PS3 is full? Thanks.

Either delete old installed games (they take up a ton of memory) or change your hard drive – there's a guide to doing so here: <http://bit.ly/ywVbul>

@PICTOPIRATE What game should I play next? *Rage*, *Assassin's Creed II*, *BioShock 2*, *Sonic Generations*, *Oblivion* or *L.A. Noire*?

L.A. Noire and *Assassin's Creed* stand out. *Sonic Generations* and *Rage* are good if you just want to press buttons and have fun things happen.

@TOMMOD1981 What is *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City* going to be the same as in terms of playability and looks?

Sort of like *SOCOM*, sort of like *Left 4 Dead*, sort of like *Resident Evil*.

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MASS EFFECT ENDING SUCKED

No spoilers here because we know some of you won't have finished it yet, and we're not complete gits. Only partial gits. However, there are still points about the ending that can be addressed here, with the full, spoiler-packed version found at the link on the bottom screenshot.

There's no real resolution and no real influence. Those are the two biggest problems with the *Mass Effect 3* ending. *Mass Effect* has been a series about choice and right at the end, choice is all but taken away. No matter what you pick, the resulting endings are too similar to each to feel satisfying or personal.

Also, some think the tone of the ending is what has sparked the crying and mass outrage. It's not. Saying more would ruin the ending but there have been other examples of games with a similar tone in their ending that have been successful because there is more to an ending than that. It's about resolution, it's about pay-off, it's about leaving a lasting memory and a talking point for players to chew over. The *Mass Effect 3* ending certainly succeeded on those last two points but perhaps not in the way BioWare ever intended...



Controller that kills you

I've got a great (well, maybe) idea: PS3 controllers that give you an electric shock every time you die! It would make games more tense and exciting if character death came with a stronger punishment than restart screens and give gamers a greater respect for life, which has to be a good thing surely? Then again, this would mean me playing COD online with this controller would be the equivalent of sitting in the electric chair...

Gordon Mclean, via email



Do you remember those vests from the old Mega Drive/SNES era you could wear that would simulate pressure when you got hit or shot? Those were rubbish and your idea is equally as

mental. Our suggestion to make people value their lives in *Call Of Duty*? When you buy it you only get one life and then the game destroys itself, like what Kojima wanted to do all those years ago. Probably some mild legal issues, but we think we've got those covered.

COMPETITION CORNER

THIS MONTH: WORMS

Do you like free stuff? Of course you like free stuff. That's why Christmas was invented. So here's the deal. We have a competition where two grand winners will get a copy of *Worms Ultimate Mayhem*, *Worms Ultimate Mayhem* T-shirts, a set of four *Worms* plushies, a set of four *Worms* plush keyrings and a Deluxe Super Sheep. We've been informed it makes a fanfare when squeezed. Eight runners-up will get the game and T-shirt. So that's ten of you who will win in total, just for getting this question right:



Who developed Worms Ultimate Mayhem?

- a) Team17
- b) Team 9000
- c) Team 8900004389 Million Brillion Trillion

Pop your answer and home address in an email to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject header 'I Like To Squeeze My Sheep, Hard'. Closing date is 11 April. Worms Plush are now available from Game On Stuff at facebook.com/gameonstuff

Your favourite magazines n



3D Artist



Retro Gamer

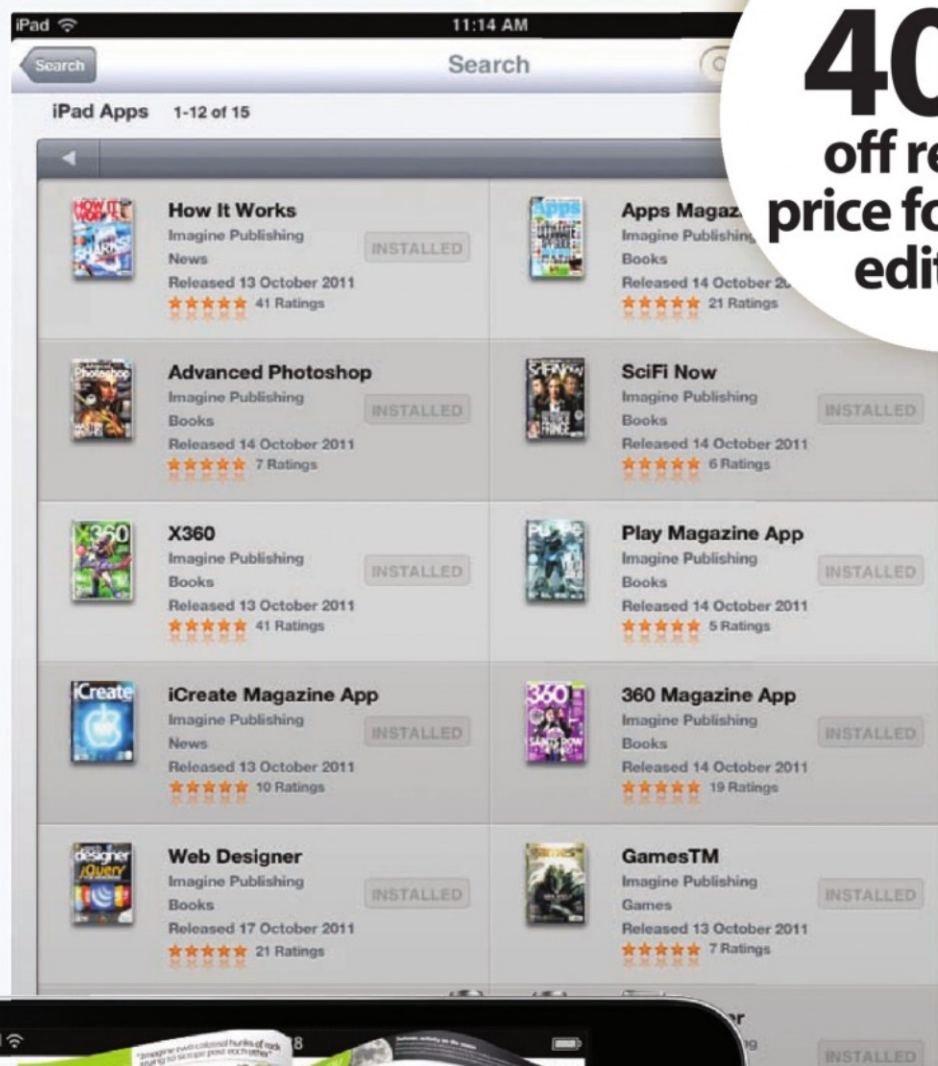


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PREVIEWS

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



● It looks like blood but it's actually 'cyborg oil'.



● Kojima tweeted this new screen, hence the low quality.

THE INGREDIENTS FOR METAL GEAR RISING

What influences make up this game?



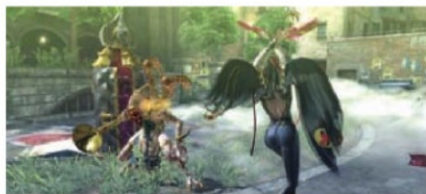
METAL GEAR SOLID 4

Setting, back story, characters, art direction.



VANQUISH

Fast speed, close-ups, cyborg enemies.



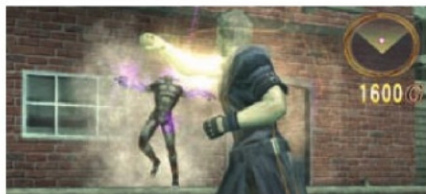
BAYONETTA

Witch Time (action slowing down), elegant style.



DEVIL MAY CRY 3

Swordplay, environment interaction, parrying.



GOD HAND

Free combat (lack of lock-on), backflips.



● All you need to fight giant robots is your sword. GO.



● This is Good Raiden, not MGS 2 Raiden.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2012

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

Stealth ditched for giant robot-carving swords



If you're not shuffling through a dusty ventilation shaft to the sound of ambient electronica before shooting a passing leg with a tranquillizer dart and waiting for a big heap of khaki uniform to collapse in front of you, you're not playing *Metal Gear*. So goes the Unwritten Law Of The Internet, which brings out the Elder Gods of the Internet with their clattering keyboards when broken. Case in point: when *Metal Gear Solid: Rising* switched to *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* by way of an explosive trailer, the 'this is not *Metal Gear*!' fist-thumping drowned out the pleas by Hideo Kojima to give it a chance.

It's an obvious point but one worth mentioning again. This isn't a MGS game. It's *Metal Gear Rising*. Different, see? Different studio as Kojima Productions has tagged in *Bayonetta* and *Vanquish* developer Platinum Games, different title, different game. The emphasis has shifted from crouchy stealth with tranquillizer guns to ninja-flipping with swords, Platinum Games immediately realising that stealth and high-speed action simply can't

coexist. So Platinum Games has been charged with squeezing its trademark action into the *Metal Gear* template, hence the heavy metal and anime excess of its trailer reboot. It's no longer about singling out one soldier drifting away from the pack and taking him down with a quiet chokehold, but charging into a group of cyborgs (no human enemies here to dodge Japanese censorship issues) and carving them up. If *Metal Gear Solid* is the brains of the operation, *Metal Gear Rising* is the rarely flexed brawn.

The initial concept of Zan-Datsu touted for *Metal Gear Rising* Version 1.0 – translated as 'cut and take' – had Raiden slicing out cyborgs' spines and absorbing their essence. Platinum Games has massaged this idea out of the new formula, as it thinks it slows the gameplay down. Likewise the 'cut anything' mechanic has been downplayed so it's no longer the focus. Kojima Productions made a few prototypes but none of them worked out, leading to the game being cancelled before Kojima reached out to Platinum.

One idea that has survived the transition is Raiden will actually be

kitted out with two weapons – his robot-slicing blade being his main but with a sub-weapon to call upon, too. We've seen him with a dagger and it's likely he'll have an arsenal of extra melee weapons, too. No guns, though, as guns will have no place in *Metal Gear Rising*, unless they're found in the hands of the enemy. Kojima says the focus of *Metal Gear Rising* is the katana, which is why he turned to Platinum Games over a potential Western developer – Japanese would do a katana best. He joked that if a Western developer was to take charge of *Rising*, he'd come back a year later to see that a gun attached to a chainsaw had become the main weapon.

Platinum has a few ideas of its own, too, building upon the action. One is that Raiden can parry attacks, even with his back turned. This is a staple of all Platinum projects, so it's no surprise to see it here. More interesting is how Raiden can use the environment to his advantage, leaping over cars and running up walls. He is a nimble, agile character who can backflip out of trouble and also slow down time to carve up the enemies and the environment,

a nod to the original 'cut anything' mechanic and also something *Bayonetta* fans will be familiar with thanks to her Witch Time ability.

More facts: Platinum rewrote the entire script in two months, with the story focusing on Raiden being contracted for VIP protection as a country rebuilding in the aftermath of a civil war finds itself overrun by hostile cyborgs. In contrast, Kojima Productions took ten months to write the script and that was anchored around the dead 'cut anything' gimmick. Kojima has also taken great care not to state who the director of the project is. Hideki Kamiya, who created *Devil May Cry* and *Bayonetta*, has stated he's not involved. Atsushi Inaba, of *Okami* and *God Hand* fame, will serve as producer but not director. Hiroki Kato, lead designer of *God Hand* and *Vanquish*, works with Platinum Games on a freelance basis.

But regardless of who it is, meshing together the talents of Kojima and Platinum Games means *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* will become the poster child for Japanese games development. It's not a *Metal Gear Solid* title but that's why it has a different name. All we need now is further proof of its quality and even the Elder Gods of the Internet might have to quieten down because they're too busy playing it.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Kojima Productions.
- Platinum Games.

- Yu Suzuki.
- Okay, maybe not him, but imagine!

READ ME

The one thing Hideo Kojima insisted above all else when handing the project to Platinum Games is that *Metal Gear Rising* runs at 60 frames per second.

Check out www.platinumgames.com to get the latest updates on *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*.

PREVIEW

RELEASE DATE: MAY

Max Payne 3



'Max Payne. Payne to the max!'

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



It's Rockstar.



Well, apart from *Manhunt 2*.



And when has it ever let us down?



But that's fine.

READ ME

Max Payne 3 is the story of what happens when your brain decides that rehab is for girls and that killing everyone as stylishly as possible is a good idea. Cheers.

✓ Cover story

Like all modern shooters *Max Payne 3* has a cover system. Unlike most modern shooters you won't – or can't – use it for too long. The reason? You can't really murder someone stylishly from cover, which you'll need to do to build your Bullet Time meter, and also your enemies are quite smart. Hang around too long and you'll be flanked, or a grenade will be sent your way.

It's nothing new, but it keeps the tempo high while allowing players a short chance to recover. Also: diving into cover *always* looks cool.

✓ Let's get physics-ical

Already synonymous with awesome physics, *Max Payne 3*'s Euphoria system takes it – to sound like a twatty marketing pillock – to the next level™. Max's designers have focused on making every interaction in the world feel connected rather than canned. Take your enemies death throes: instead of slumping to the floor they'll fall, trip and stumble. Some will attempt to stay upright, others will go over quickly while still firing their weapon in a vain attempt to hit Max. Rather than just focusing on the point where they get hit, now it's about how they react all the way to their demise.

✓ American splendour

It's a sight to bring tears to the eyes of everyone that hated the Brazil setting: Max, with hair, in his trench, shooting people in Noo Yoik. Rockstar is well-known for interesting narratives, and Max's cuts back and forward between the US and Brazil, showing how he got messed up in the murky world of cartels and beards.

We're not sure how much of the game takes place in America, but we're excited to see *Max Payne*'s signature downtrodden neighbourhoods on current generation hardware.

✓ Nuts for Brazil

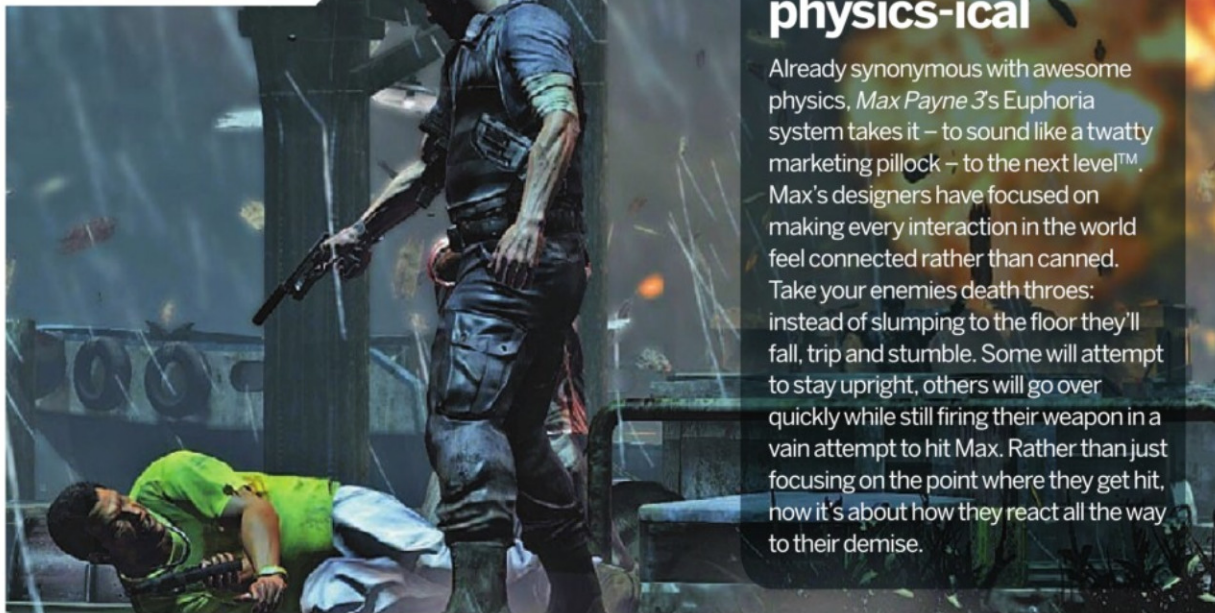
It was a bold move from Rockstar to move Max to Brazil. Haters naturally deplored the change, decrying that it wasn't '*Max Payne*', but Rockstar made its name transposing established elements into different cities and times (*GTA*, anyone?).

Sao Paulo isn't just a new background to drop Max onto: the culture of the city swirls around him as he explores it, with one recurring element being football. As you'd imagine Brazil is nuts for the game, and as such you'll see poor children kicking a ball around in a favela, shootouts in football stadiums, and even your buddy Pasos calling you out for criticising the game. Small touches, but good ones.

✗ Does it have that something special?

There is no doubt in our minds that *Max Payne 3* will be a fantastic exercise in shooting people's brains off, but we'd love it to be so much more than that. The question is how. With it being a linear game (and hence not having the shock and awe of a *Red Dead* or a *GTA*) we'd hope that Rockstar comes up with something special on the narrative front. Nothing too serious, mind (this series is meant to be goofy), but it's shown it can blend 'issues' with the absurd in *GTA IV*. We're hoping for more of the same here.

Max Payne 3 is being developed by a conjunction of Rockstar Games. Head over to rockstargames.com to check them out.





✓ Multiplayer bullet time

Since the release of the first *Max Payne* the question of multiplayer has been bandied around. Some thought it was a good idea. Others thought it unworkable. Not one for ducking a challenge Rockstar has gone with the former on *Max Payne 3*, with a multiplayer that has persistent levelling, objective-based gameplay, narrative elements and even perks (yes, bullet time is one of them). Expect more on this very soon, but given that *GTA IV* and *Red Dead* both had excellent multiplayer suites we've got high hopes for this one.



✓ Aim to please

Max Payne is so critically acclaimed because it makes you feel like a badass. It's that simple. For most people the ultimate badassery they'll feel is when they save money at Asda, which is why *Max Payne 3* has different aiming settings, catering for everyone from the occasional player to the head-shooting ninja. Rockstar told us that it'd prefer players to use the no-lock mode (free aim essentially) for maximum badassery, but there is Wuss mode (not the real name) which does a lot of the work for you. Man up.



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Far Cry 3

On an island in the sun, we'll be playing and having fun

PS3

Some guessed Antarctic, some assumed sticking in the African savannah, some even thought it would go further into a fantastical future – but no, *Far Cry 3* is going back to the island. Well, that's not strictly true: it's going back to *some* islands, and as far as we know none of them were featured in the original game. Just to clear that up for you.

You've read our words on *Far Cry 3* in past issues, and you've probably picked up an air of trepidation from us. This stands: the first game was good but went hugely off the rails towards the end and the second – while rich in interesting ideas and officially on the list of 'games we are glad exist' – didn't find its footing with us. Then there's the fact what we had seen of the game so far didn't do much to inspire, looking as it did to move away from the more thoughtful play of *Far Cry 2*.

But our trepidation is showing signs of being worn down as we become accustomed to the ideas behind *Far Cry 3*; to what it is Ubisoft Montreal is trying to do with the game. This is an island paradise gone to hell in which a normal man is forced to do things to survive – and to find his girlfriend. We could spend time here wondering aloud as to how exactly

a 'normal man' can shoot guns and wield throwing knives effectively, but we won't. We'll just put that thought out there for you to mull over.

Anyway, rather than the expansive, almost freeform nature of missions in the last game, *Far Cry 3* is home to some more compact, crafted experiences. Take, for example, the mission on a transport ship that's run aground – you're closed-in, forced to operate in confined spaces. It's a set mission and it plays out like one, but once you're done with it you're back out into the open, lush world of the Pacific island(s) the game takes place on.

That's not to say it's all corridors and cover shooting, and there will be more than enough opportunities to stalk your enemies from the bushes for 20 minutes before running out and stabbing them in the neck. *Far Cry* in a nutshell, really.

There's also the missions that deal more with psychology and matters of the head – missions that look to actually mess with the player in some way. One, for example, sees the player injected with a 'cure' to an ailment and then required to repay the favour by the clearly a-bit-wrong-in-the-head doctor by obtaining some fungus of

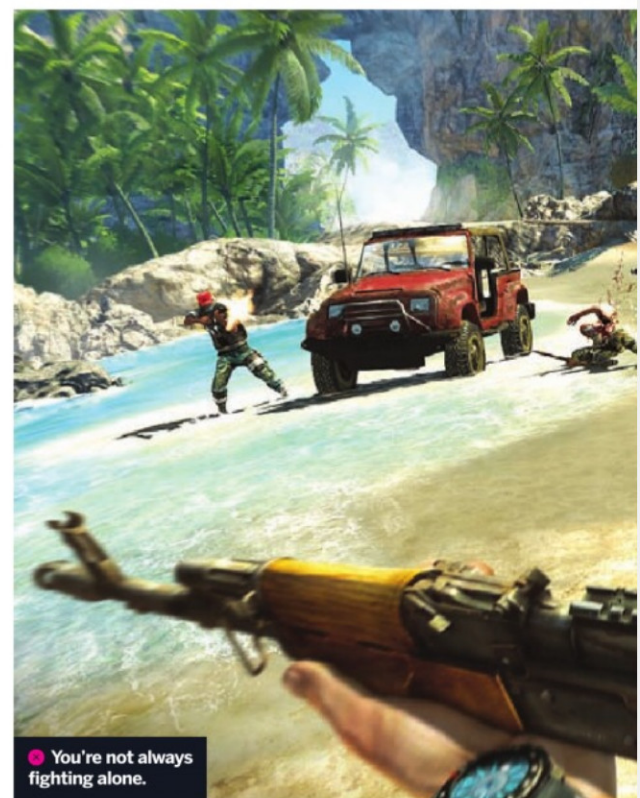
questionable repute for him. Rather than all-out blasting it turns into a bit a trip – in more than one sense of the word. Turns out your 'cure' has some interesting side effects, messing with vision and general perception of the area you're navigating. Basically you have to pick some mushrooms (and not get killed) while high. That's a bit more interesting than *'DudeBro Shooter 9'*, at least.

Progression through the game is another area of change, offering players a more traditional role-playing style of making you and your weapons stronger as things progress. It also means less jamming AK47s. We still have nightmares about those damn jamming AK47s.

Regardless of our gut feeling on this one it's still too early to call it. We doubt – we *hope* *Far Cry 3* will not dip its hand too much into the pocket of its contemporary with which it shares a genre. We don't want *'Call Of Cry'*. We've got our eyes on it and will be watching with great interest, filling you in along the way. For now? For now we wait. Probably in the bushes next to a beautiful beach, or something.

Far Cry 3 is being developed by Ubisoft Montreal. Check out www.farcry3.com for more details.

The game takes place on an island paradise gone bad.



You're not always fighting alone.



You'll be able to upgrade and improve your weapons as you progress.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Freedom to approach situations as you see fit. Pretty much.
- Tropical islands are more interesting than the savannah. Maybe.
- Some may appreciate the tighter focus.
- No more of those blasted respawning checkpoints.

READ ME

Far Cry 2 was given away for free to PlayStation Plus subscribers quite recently. Despite its faults, that was an excellent offer.



There will be a good mix of both linear and more open levels on offer.



A SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

Don't just play indie

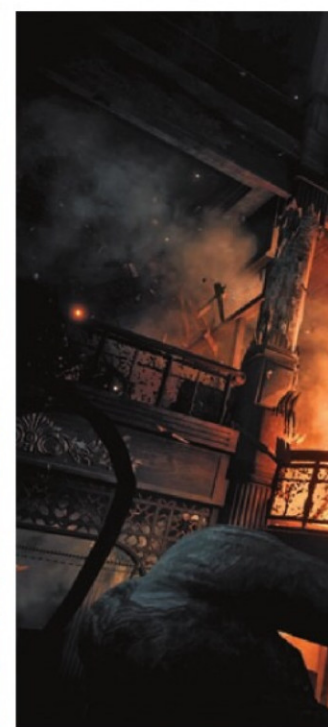
UBISOFT HAS BEEN swift(ish) to announce plans for multiplayer to go alongside *Far Cry 3*. Beyond the usual trappings that can be expected on-disc, the studio is aiming to bring in "elements from the indie scene and social games". Does this mean *Dragon Age*-style accompaniments to be played through Facebook along with an iOS/Android app? We don't know, but it wouldn't be so out of the question. Just as long as none of it – including the on-disc MP – detracts from the core single-player experience then it's fine. Oh, and as long as ridiculous DLC extras à la *Mass Effect 3* are avoided.



This guy is a doctor. He's a bit mental.



Here's a special forces soldier, spying on other franchises for ideas (probably).



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Medal Of Honor: Warfighter

Around the world in 80 slays

PS3

There was a time, back in the 1800s when dinosaurs roamed the land (we think it was then, history isn't our strong point), games had names like 'Racing', 'Driving', 'Golf', 'Football'. Want to know what games nowadays would be called if marketing departments weren't invented? *Uncharted* would be called 'Treasure'. *Mass Effect* would be called 'Space'. And now, ladies and gentlemen, 'Warfighter'! Just a few steps removed from 'Dudebro Manshooter 2'.

Creatively bankrupt name aside, EA has bigger problems on its hands with this *MOH* sequel, chief among them being that the last game, while mechanically solid, was also incredibly boring. EA spent the entire development process jawing that it was being respectful to the Tier 1 operators it was based upon, but the trouble with that is it

isn't much fun. *Call Of Duty* may be stupid and braindead, but it is fun and exciting in certain ways.

Medal Of Honor, on the other hand, couldn't decide whether it wanted to be a simulator or a shooter, falling between two stools. It had the reverence to the craft with none of the planning. It also had a headshot indicator, but none of the over-the-top fun that a game featuring such silliness demands.

In fairness, developer Danger Close does seem to have taken this on board. There's still a personal tale to be told here, as lead character Preacher juggles the demands of killing people professionally with having a family, but there's also more depth. Your group of merry men are on a mission to stop a terrorist network that is producing a chemical named PETN, an explosive that has been used in real-world bombings.

This task will take players around the world, with the demo mission taking place in the Philippines. Your squad has to breach and clear a building that is being used as cover by terrorists. The kicker is that they've got hostages.

And there's a typhoon going on. With heavy rain swirling all around – *Battlefield 3*'s Frostbite 2 engine being used to good effect – *Warfighter*'s new door-breaching mechanic is shown off. It's nothing like the real thing (at least as far as we can guess, typing this from our heated office with an open can of Pringles in arm's reach), but having the choice of how you enter the room is welcome in a game that bills itself as authentic.

With the hostages secure your team makes a spectacular getaway, hightailing it on speedboats before being elevated into the skies by waiting choppers. It points

to a more spectacle-focused experience, which is fine by us. As long as Danger Close actually decides on which path it wants to go down this time and sticks to it rather than hedging its bets then it's guaranteed to succeed the original.

What's less clear is whether or not the multiplayer side of the game can improve on the prequel's efforts. Last time around multiplayer was far and away the most entertaining part of the package: developed by DICE, it had a few interesting twists on the multiplayer FPS. This time Danger Close will be handling both parts of the package. Let's hope it has some equally good ideas as the Swedish developer: it would be a shame to see DICE leave the franchise and Danger Close fail to adequately step into its shoes.

As it would if *Warfighter* failed, again, to measure up to the obvious love poured into it by its creators. We appreciate the effort, but effort alone is not enough. Now's the time to come up with the goods.

For more info about **Warfighter**, check out Danger Close's website at www.dangerclosegames.com

Looks like Danger Close has been playing some *Uncharted 3*.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Beards.



Bigger overall story.



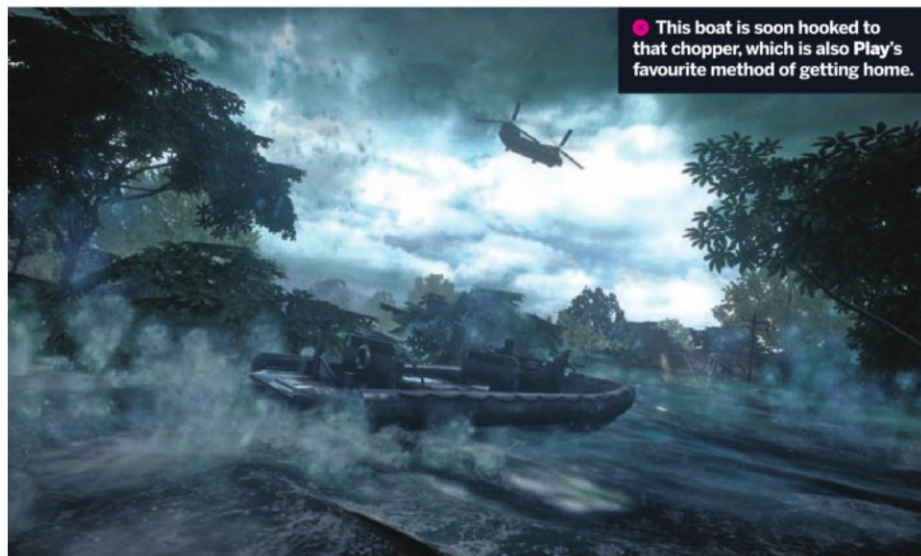
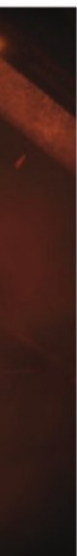
Frostbite 2.



More beards.

READ ME

For the first *Medal Of Honor* game certain Danger Close execs grew beards in a show of solidarity.



● This boat is soon hooked to that chopper, which is also Play's favourite method of getting home.



● Is that Captain Price at the front?



● They see America rollin', they hatin'.

SPECIAL FORCES FACE-OFF

Different units make the multiplayer cut

WITH MP BEING a pretty big deal to this rebooted *Medal Of Honor*, Danger Close has paid close attention to the people you'll play as in-game. Maybe mindful of the controversy that was stirred up by the thought of playing as the Taliban in the first game, *Warfighter* features 12 different spec ops units from ten countries. These include the SAS, Navy SEALs, Australia's SASR, Germany's KSK and Poland's GROM.

This doesn't answer the question of what people will make of so-called friendly factions going up against each other, but we're sure that'll be explained in time. Maybe.

PREVIEW

✓ Story is interesting

The Last Of Us picks up 20 years after society has... well, it's not society any more. The Cordyceps fungal infection has made the jump to humans and the world has collapsed in on itself. Living in one of the only remaining quarantine zones, player character Joel is tasked with a mission to deliver 14-year-old Ellie to a destination outside of the safe zone. Unsurprisingly, the plan goes to hell and the two end up trapped in the outside world. More than that, we do not know, but it's certainly an interesting setup.

The *Last Of Us* is being developed by Naughty Dog. Check out www.lastofus.com for more details.



RELEASE DATE: TBC

The Last Of Us



Imagine a world free of all those meddlesome people. Heaven

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Naughty Dog is vocal about how it wants to introduce us to something different.
- Anything influenced by the BBC's *Planet Earth* has to be great.
- Playing a lead character of genuinely questionable morals might be a nice change.
- It looks real purdy.

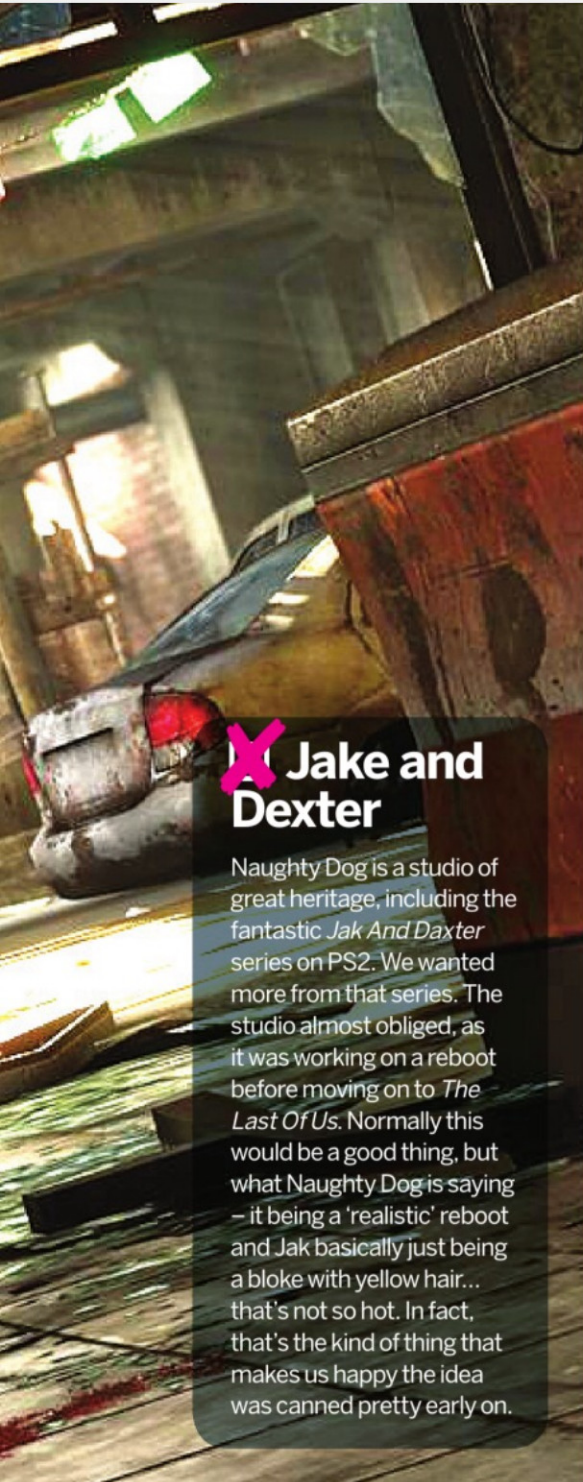
READ ME

Naughty Dog, one of the finest developers out there, made the horrible *Mortal Kombat* rip-off *Way Of The Warrior* back in 1994. True story.

✓ Bad bastard

Naughty Dog is aiming to make the lead characters in *The Last Of Us* a bit more interesting than your usual gaming fare. We've heard cries of this sort before, though, so we're keeping a healthy level of scepticism for the time being. But that's not to say what we've heard isn't interesting: Joel isn't a nice man, his morality has eroded to the point he's willing to torture and murder to get his way – interesting and a shift away from the norm. No word on whether we also get Evil Ellie or not.





✗ Jake and Dexter

Naughty Dog is a studio of great heritage, including the fantastic *Jak And Daxter* series on PS2. We wanted more from that series. The studio almost obliged, as it was working on a reboot before moving on to *The Last Of Us*. Normally this would be a good thing, but what Naughty Dog is saying – it being a 'realistic' reboot and Jak basically just being a bloke with yellow hair... that's not so hot. In fact, that's the kind of thing that makes us happy the idea was canned pretty early on.



SIX PLUS ONE

✓ Smart AI at work

Seeing as *The Last Of Us* has players escorting an NPC, it's fair for our brains to fear the worst. Naughty Dog knows this and has gone to great pains to make sure the AI in the game is not ruinous to the experience – Ellie will not break your stealth, she will not get in the way or get stuck in a corner, but she *will* help out sometimes. Similarly, enemy AI has been made with more emphasis on realism – 'lethality', 'reality' and 'unpredictability' all words thrown around by Naughty Dog.



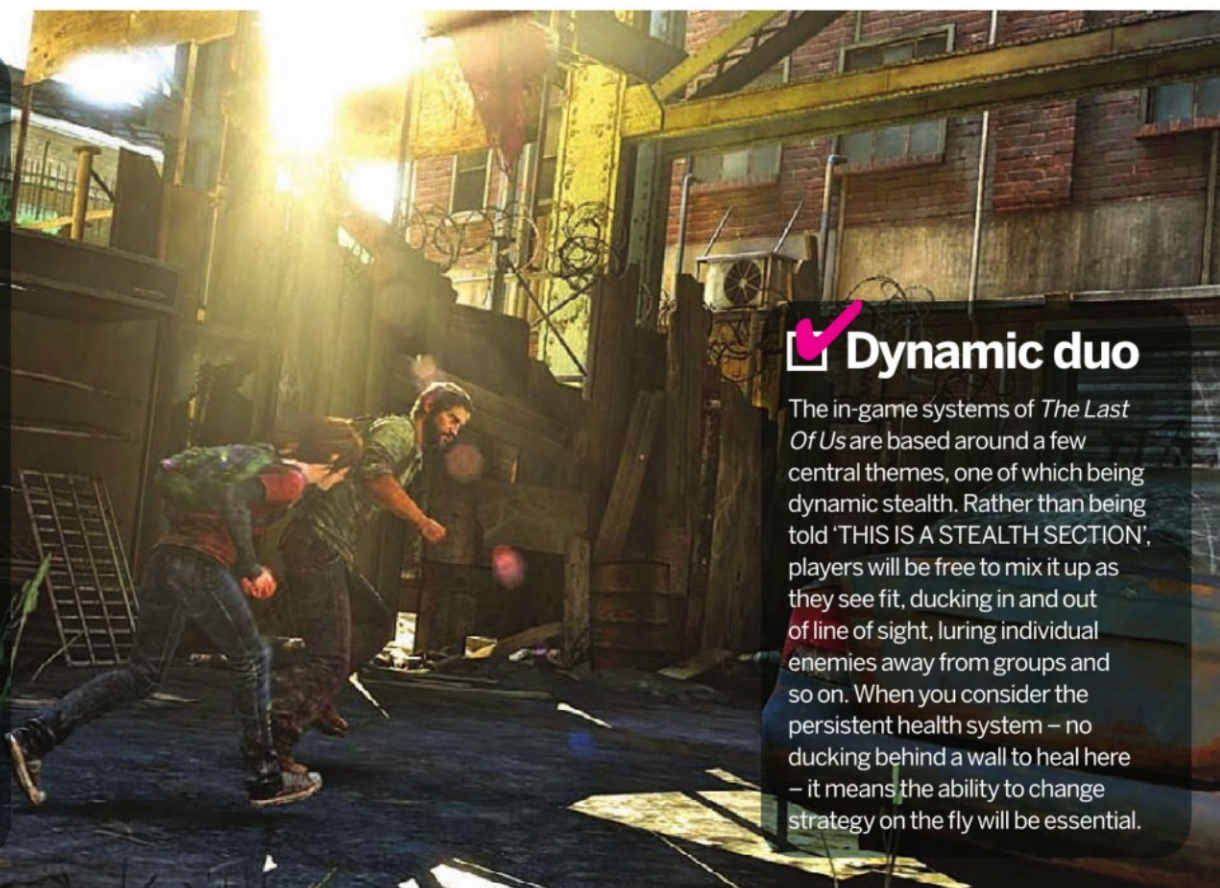
✓ Looks eerie and different

Browsing the screens on these pages you're likely to feel the same way we do and, in fact, the way Naughty Dog wants you to feel: it's beautiful, but it's eerie. Odd. A bit wrong. It takes into account all of the 'ruin porn' the devs have been watching, the way in which nature is constantly being batted back from encroaching on our towns and cities, and what happens when we let our guard down for two decades. We've already let our guard down in the likes of Detroit, if you want a real-world example.



✓ Great influences

The developers have taken influences from the usual areas and in some rather obvious ways, if you know what to look for. But unlike many other games where influences are ignored or denied, Naughty Dog is embracing those that give *The Last Of Us* direction – *No Country For Old Men*, *The Road*, *The Walking Dead* and *Children Of Men* have all been touted by the devs (among others) as colouring and inspiring development. We're yet to know what gaming mechanics have guided their choices though.



✓ Dynamic duo

The in-game systems of *The Last Of Us* are based around a few central themes, one of which being dynamic stealth. Rather than being told 'THIS IS A STEALTH SECTION', players will be free to mix it up as they see fit, ducking in and out of line of sight, luring individual enemies away from groups and so on. When you consider the persistent health system – no ducking behind a wall to heal here – it means the ability to change strategy on the fly will be essential.

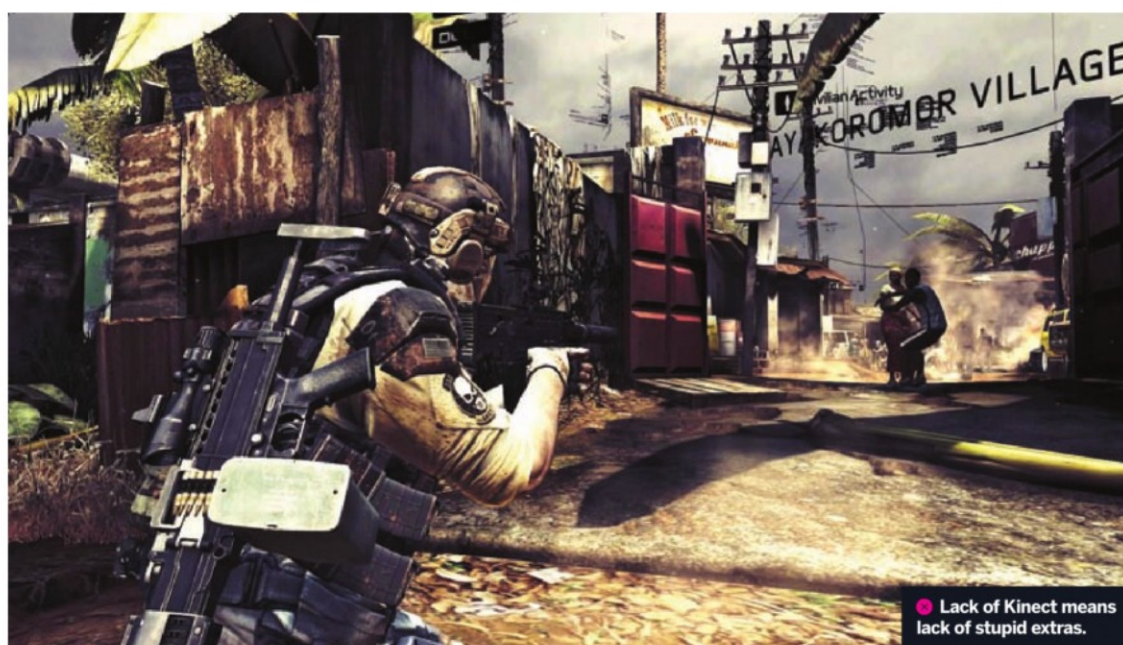
PREVIEW



● Four player co-op will almost certainly be the main draw here.



● Mission objectives and extra info will be flashed up on the environment.



● Lack of Kinect means lack of stupid extras.



● It does look pretty nice – stylish, too.

SOMEBODY CALL PETA

Because it's guerrilla warfare ah ho ho ha haaa

REJOICE! FUTURE SOLDIER is also home to a horde mode-style multiplayer game by the name of Guerrilla mode. It sees players team up to hold off waves of enemies in increasing numbers. Tasked with securing a headquarters, players receive boosts and bonuses for surviving certain numbers of waves – say, a radar for living through two or three, or an air strike for not dying in five – and after ten waves are made to move on to another base and carry on defending like it ain't no thang. World-changing? Absolutely not. Fun? From what we've played, yes.

● The game is less sci-fi, pushing towards realism.

UPDATE



RELEASE DATE: 25 MAY

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

SPOILER: the soldier of the future will use guns



So we don't have Kinect compatibility on *Future Soldier* here in PS3 Land. And you know what that means? That means we end up with a game free of the nonsense those poor kids on Xbox 360 are going to have to put up with.

Rather than shouting 'BUILD GUN BANG!' at our ungainly peripheral (in our warehouse-sized living room) we can simply get on with the job of running around shooting people in the fourth *proper Ghost Recon* release.

What is there to expect from a game with Tom Clancy's name attached? Well, the usual: militaristic settings bringing a level of tactics and (apparent) realism you don't really get elsewhere. While *Future Soldier* has moved away from the plan-and-execute, one-shot-you're-dead emphasis of earlier Tommy boy titles, it's still

a more considered shooter than much of the competition.

All we've seen of *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* so far from a planning perspective was the ability to choose from a couple of breach points when entering an area. Other than that it's a game that favours a slowly, slowly approach – we were encouraged to play in a difficult, yet rewarding, stealth fashion. It's very much possible for action to devolve into a stand-up firefight, but this is not the most appealing course of action. Mainly because you'll likely die quite quickly.

The single-player game is the same as the co-operative campaign, meaning players can go into the fray themselves or with the company of human team-mates. Naturally this makes the experience more involving and negates the need for clumsy planning and manoeuvring mechanics in the game – replace

them with a barked "get over there!" through a headset for the full effect. But it also opens up the chance to engage in special, fun-time killing actions for the whole squad.

Players have access to recon drones – flying cameras, essentially. Using one of these drones, a player can highlight up to four targets for their team-mates to zero in on. The team can then co-ordinate its shots against four enemies at once, accompanied by the obligatory kill cam, and take out multiple targets in style. It's a neat little feature, reminding us of one of the few things that was good about EA's *Army Of Two*.

One of the more promising points about *Future Soldier* is the level of challenge. We're not sure if it's going to fit in on our updated 'hardest games ever' feature that we haven't actually updated, but it's by no means a walkover. Maybe we're

getting soft, coddled as we are by many modern shooters and their seeming need to never let you fail. But this is *Ghost Recon*, and *Ghost Recon* is a series where you can fail quite spectacularly – especially if you're not working as a team.

From a presentation angle it's what you would expect – the game looks nice, albeit very much in the real (future) world, and with less of a sci-fi feel than previous entries. It also incorporates the same sort of touches as *Splinter Cell: Conviction* – objectives plastered across surfaces and the like. We like that, because it looks all cool and stuff, so we're going to allow it.

From what we've seen and played of *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* so far it's safe to say it's looking to be a solid experience. But at the same time it's also safe to say it's looking to be an unspectacular experience. A few unique ideas won't be enough to save the game from being merely half-decent, so here's hoping the full game has more to offer than what we've seen.

Future Soldier is being developed by Ubisoft. Check out www.ghostrecon.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Plays well enough from what we've experienced so far.
- Everybody loves faceless death machines from the future, right?
- Offers an actual challenge, which is nice.
- Multiplayer seems to be a laugh.

READ ME

Ghost Recon: Predator came out on PSP back in 2010. No interesting fact to go with that, we're just reminding you because you likely forgot.

PREVIEW

1

WASHINGTON RIP

George Washington: overrated general, American hero, robotic killing machine. One of these attributes is exclusive to *Infinite* – we'll let you decide which.

Infinite's Washington isn't actually him of course, but the Motorized Patriot in his image. He's one of the 'Heavy Hitters', sub-bosses (akin to Big Daddies) that will hunt you down and attempt to make you deader than MiniDisc. Washington has no regard for danger (so pretty accurate to the real man then) and will shrug off bullets in an attempt to end your day on a rather sour note. With American flags as wings and a face that falls off after it takes too much damage, he's pretty intimidating. We'll still kill him mind.



2

BOYS OF SILENCE

One of the few designs that didn't need much iterating beyond the original concept, the Boys of Silence are blind, with gramophone horns for ears as part of the metal helmet covering their face making them sensitive to noise instead.

The best way to deal with them is to avoid them, tip-toeing around without making a sound. If you deal with them head-on or give away that you're near, the mouth part of the helmet opens up and they let out a terrifying scream, alerting nearby enemies so you're left with nowhere to hide.

They're tough opponents and their presence nearby will change the way you play but most of all, they look rad as balls. Clumsy oiks be warned – you *will* have to fight them if you're stumbling about the place in your clown shoes.



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

BioShock Infinite

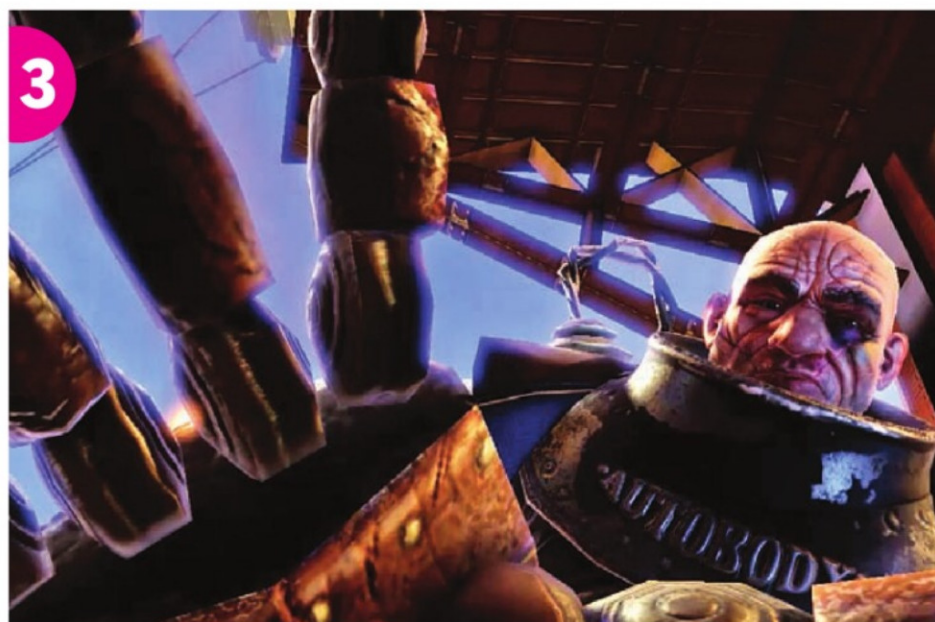
It's all about the dead presidents

PS3

With the 16 October release date locked and loaded, the pressure is on for *BioShock Infinite* developer Irrational. While the release might seem unbearably far away for fans of the series, Levine and co are probably sleeping under their desks and constantly reassuring their families they're not dead.

Which is exactly what they should be doing: if this is anything less than brilliant they're already dead. Luckily then *BioShock Infinite* seems on track: Irrational has shown off three more enemies to join the fray. Here they are.

BioShock Infinite is being developed by Irrational Games. Check them out at www.irrationalgames.com



THE HANDYMAN

You may have glimpsed him before in some of the trailers but now we have more information on these lumbering creatures. Handymen are said to be 'tragic figures', with a sad story on how they've ended up in their fat, metal bodies. Probably gets hot and sweaty in there. Eurgh.

Not that you'll be feeling sorry for him when he's using his massive limbs to leap about and even throw other enemies at you. It's not just you who finds him scary, as even enemies cower in fear, in case they're flung headfirst your way. We'll just throw a grenade, turn 180 degrees and run. Like in all games!

RELEASE DATE: MAY

Dragon's Dogma

Pawn cocktail

PS3

We were going to tell you about *Dragon's Dogma*. But why should we when we have director Hideaki Itsuno to tell us?

"I think we made something that is a beautiful combination that poses the qualities of both an action and a role-playing game; think of it as featuring the quality fighting of a triple-A action game, with the gameplay of an RPG," Itsuno explains. "The difficulty of the action changes based on the RPG strategies you choose."

"This is an action game that allows you to control your party in a hassle-free online experience. We are pushing boundaries in the genre with the

approach we've taken to the integration of social networks."

You can import your PSN friends' attributes to your pawns, but there's no actual multiplayer. Itsuno himself isn't worried, despite the feedback.

"I feel that you need to play the game in order to truly understand that this is a brand-new type of multiplayer game. The combination of energetic and responsive action elements along with the relaxed RPG elements is something that you cannot experience in present multiplayer games. I can't wait for you guys to get out there and play this game online."

Capcom is publishing *Dragon's Dogma*. Check out its website at capcom-europe.com



That is a GREAT SWORD.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

The Dragons.

The Goblins.

The Zombies.

Oh my.

READ ME

Dragon's Dogma is one of Capcom's most lavishly funded projects. Let's hope the gameplay matches up to the outlay.

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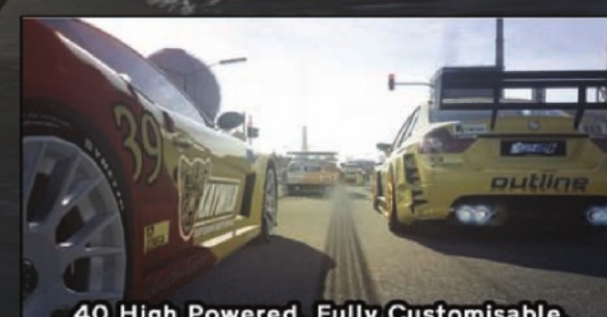
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RELEASE DATE: MAY

Spec Ops: The Line

Hold the line! Games aren't always on time, woah oh oh

PS3

Moral choices in games generally suck. Or, at least the consequences of them on your characters' appearances and psyche do. *Mass Effect* is generally an exception to this rule, but still stumbles somewhat with its Paragon and Renegade decisions. You overtly choose to do bad things, then your eyes turn red. Why? Because we need to know that we've done bad things, silly.

This, of course, is nonsense. A lot of people who do bad things, inadvertently or not, think they're doing the right thing. Their eyes do not go red. It just doesn't happen. There are no good or bad endings.

It's this nonsensical good/bad divide that *Spec Ops: The Line* is hoping to avoid, instead positioning itself as a game of greys: choices that have consequences which aren't clear. Which is quite something for what appears at first glance to be a traditional Man-Shoot, Only This Time Set In Dubai With Sand.

A short demo reinforced this point, with a seemingly 'correct' decision made by US forces going horribly wrong. We won't spoil it, but you don't have all the info. You have to work with what you've got, and sometimes that's not enough. In this case, it's not

nearly enough. You'll know it when you get to it in the full game.

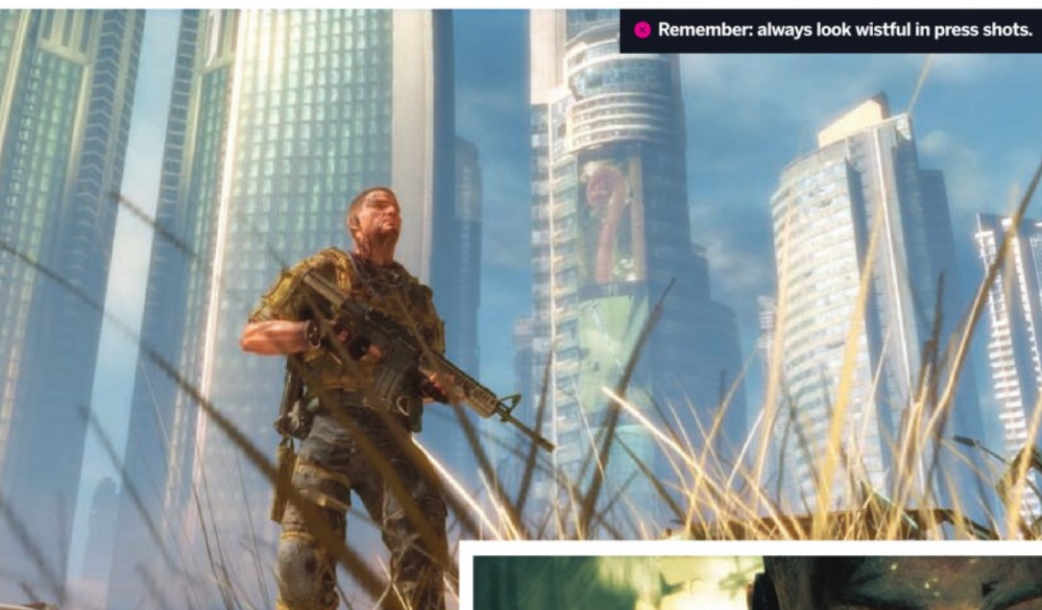
This sort of stuff is rare in videogames, and although this might end up being a nice piece of promotional guff to separate *Spec Ops* from the 10,000,000 other shooters out there it's good to see someone is at least trying.

Speaking of marketing bull, no piece on *Spec Ops* is complete without mention of the use of sand, which has been compared to *BioShock*'s use of water. Again, we haven't seen enough to qualify this claim, but the sight of a wrecked, sandstorm-ridden Dubai is a nice change of pace from grey military aesthetic that dominates proceedings these days. You and your squad of fellow US soldiers will have to navigate a nation that has in part changed beyond recognition, and we're hopeful that developer Yager will use the sand as something more than a gimmick.

There was a time when we didn't expect *Spec Ops* to ever come out and, to be frank, up until this point we didn't care. Recent impressions, however, have revealed an interesting attempt to do something different.

Spec Ops is being developed by Yager Development. Check out its website at www.yager.de

Remember: always look wistful in press shots.



This doesn't look good, no matter how you slice it.



MY WAY OR THE HIGH WAY

Spec Ops dares to be different

AS WELL AS taking a different approach to telling its story, *Spec Ops* also wants to change attitudes to guns. Simply put *Spec Ops* doesn't want you blasting through waves of bad guys until you hit a checkpoint: Dubai is filled with people who could conceivably be both good and bad. There will be shooting, but you'll have to pick your targets.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Actual choices.
- No power armour.
- Interesting setting.
- NO power armour.

READ ME

Spec Ops is based loosely on Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart Of Darkness*, which inspired *Apocalypse Now*. We're going to go out on a limb and say it probably won't be as good as either, though. Just saying.

Use the **SciFiNow** flowchart to find out...



PREVIEW



Previously...

This is the game that was formerly *True Crime: Hong Kong* – a title we featured on the cover of *Play 191* and once thought dead. What's changed, (bar the name and publisher – from Activision to Square Enix)? There's support being given to United Front Studios by the folks at Square Enix London Studios, which has experience with *Just Cause 2* and *Batman: Arkham Asylum* among others. But aside from these relatively minor points, it's still very much the same game as we saw in Vancouver a few years ago – an open-world undercover cop-'em-up.

Face facts

There is what we would hastily call an XP, maybe even morality, system in place through *Sleeping Dogs* in the shape of 'Face'. It's basically respect, earned by completing missions, side missions and other actions and it is used to open up new avenues of play. What this means, United Front wouldn't go into much detail about, but it does relate to how you actually play the game as well as your abilities – which are upgradeable – in both 'cop' and 'Triad' categories. A callback to the yin and yang of the original *True Crime* game? Maybe.



RELEASE DATE: AUGUST

Sleeping Dogs

PS3 If at first you don't succeed, try and Triad again

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Open-world action makes us happy.
- An atmospheric and interesting take on Hong Kong.
- It's nice to see United Front is still making it.
- Triads: at least they're different.

READ ME

United Front Games has only ever developed *ModNation Racers*, aside from *Sleeping Dogs*. We liked that, though, so it's absolutely fine.



Sleeping Dogs is being developed by United Front Games. Check out www.sleepingdogs.net for more details.

Googley maps

Sleeping Dogs is set in a not-entirely-accurate representation of Hong Kong – a fictionalised and not 100 per cent take on the island city-state. But it's not just the dense, packed streets, neon signs, marketplaces and temples of the Chinese administrative region – players will be able to explore outside of the main city areas, the more rural districts and even the mountain at the island's centre. There's been some talk of the ex-*Need For Speed* staff working on the game 'salivating' at the prospect of making races on the winding, rural roads.





✓ Crime's past

As *Sleeping Dogs* was originally a new entry to the *True Crime* series, it's fair to assume it would have more than just a passing resemblance to the previous entries. But it's not as close as you might expect – while the core mechanics are similar: an open world, free to explore and drive around as the player sees fit in which you play as a cop – it ties in in no other ways. This was a deliberate decision on the part of the developer and one that, all things considered, has probably worked out for the best.

SIX PLUS ONE

✓ Triple Triad

But what – and who – are the Triads, the organisation with which the player is undercover? Fortunately United Front wheeled out a former chief inspector of Hong Kong's Triad division to give us some explanation. Organised crime families that have been around for hundreds of years, carrying out everything from minor larceny to murder – and every other crime in-between. They're not what you would call 'nice people', but hey – at least it's a different antagonist to the usual 'foreigners with guns' thing we're used to... oh, wait.



✗ Shooty bad bang

It's plain to see that *Sleeping Dogs* has a lot of things going for it, but at the same time we're wary of both the driving and shooting aspects. Neither of them seem to be as good as, say, *Grand Theft Auto IV*. That doesn't mean they're broken or can't be fixed, but from what we've seen they might well let down the overall experience, and when you're not competing with a game that set the standard years ago, you're not competing at all. We haven't written it off yet, though.

✓ The story bit

Sleeping Dogs takes in the story of Detective Wei Shen, working undercover as a Triad on behalf of the Hong Kong Police. Influences come in the shape of movies like *The Departed* (itself based on the Hong Kong cinema classic *Infernal Affairs*) and the story will see Shen struggling to balance his cover with doing the right thing. It's been said more than once that the cost of what he does while undercover may well outweigh what it is he accomplishes while retaining his concealment.



RELEASE DATE: MAY

DiRT: Showdown

The racing game you all can love, even the rubbish drivers

Each stage has a lot of interesting visual clutter happening in the background.

PS3

As our completely made up and in no way scientific Department Of Advanced Gaming Statistics tells us, only 4% of you are good at racing games. That leaves 96% of us who use other cars as a way to slow down around corners, only ever use the brake in desperation before hitting the wall and spend more time tuning up the custom soundtrack than the gears-to-win ratio or whatever it's called. As you can tell, we're in the 96%.

So it's a good job *DiRT: Showdown* was made for us, taking the racing excellence for the *DiRT* series and sprinkling it over a turbo-fuelled festival of carnage, crashes and chaos. "It's definitely an idea that's been in the studio's collective mind for quite a while now," explained Mike Chapman, senior games designer at Codemasters. "We were confident that the skill set that we'd developed over the years as well as our ever-evolving tech would lend itself really well to creating something a little less straight-laced, less sanctioned and generally just a bit more out there. As fans of past games such as *Destruction Derby* as well, we started to imagine the possibilities of forging a new direction for the *DiRT* series. While we wanted to offer something new, we never saw this as a replacement to everything

that the previous *DiRT* games had represented. Rather, developing *DiRT: Showdown* offers us a way to create more focused experiences in the future."

So what's the trick to making a racing game accessible? "I don't believe there really is a trick to make that happen," continued Iain Smith, associate producer on *Showdown*. "I think there are a multitude of different choices and thought processes required in the development process to get more players interested in playing a game like this. The first step for us is always contact with players, whether that's through formal focus tests or collecting data from our servers. These things actively inform the design process, so we knew for example that this time round we would have to hold the player's hand a little more with HOONIGAN gymkhana modes. For that reason we've included in-game tutorial prompts and worked hard on making the mechanics of those modes more intuitive. Once we implement in game, we always get focus testers back in to see if those changes have worked, and part of that is making sure we include people who wouldn't normally play our games. It's definitely a back-and-forth process."

Another part of making *DiRT: Showdown* appealing to those who wouldn't know where to pour fuel if you gave them a choice between a fuel tank or a Blu-ray player is making the whole thing look more interesting. Racing games tend to have half the screen full of sky, with photorealistic clouds. *DiRT: Showdown* has fireworks, cruise ships, big wheels, spotlights and so on. It's far, far busier and more interesting. But what else does it have? Dinosaurs? Spaceships? "Well, Nevada would be the perfect place for UFOs... but we've actually not gone quite as wacky as that," said Iain Smith, batting our intense Paxman-like questions out the park. "We have included the obligatory windy man object which tends to rear its head at live events but as a little bit of an in-joke we've given it lots of different personalities. Cactus windy man and Alien windy man appear in Nevada, there's a Medallion windy man in Miami and – for the first time ever – Windy Girl. You'll have to try your best to find them all! In seriousness, there are a number of things that are making the skyline look prettier than ever; whether it's increased detail in the actual sky textures themselves or the upped amount of particles and visual effects."

There's also the smash-bang-wallop selection of mini-games on offer, such as Knockout, Sumo and Rampage, and they bring to mind classic racing games like *Destruction Derby* and *Carmageddon*. Why did those games die off? "I wouldn't say that they have died off; rather I think that since those games were originally created, we've obviously gone through several console cycles and the landscape of games and entertainment really has changed several times over," said Chapman.

"Generally speaking," he continued, "with the increases in processing power and graphical fidelity that has been afforded to us by such huge advancements in hardware, you tend to find that developers will strive ever more towards realism. It makes sense, of course, as it's a great opportunity to offer players more immersion if you make the game look more and more like their idea of the real thing. However, although you can offer a compelling experience by aping reality, sometimes players want to play something that's even more removed from their daily experiences. I think the trend is definitely going back in the other direction now as is evident by what we're doing with *DiRT: Showdown*. We still ground the experience in reality but we're offering a much wider scope compared to anything we've developed before."

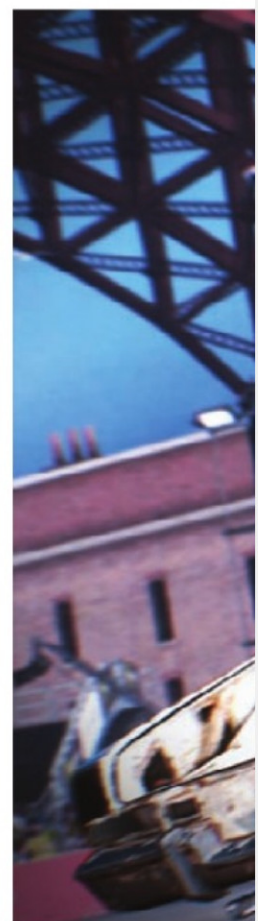
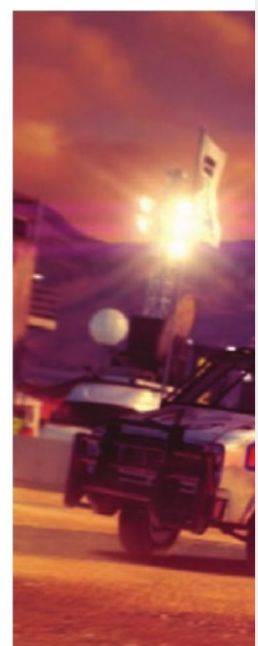
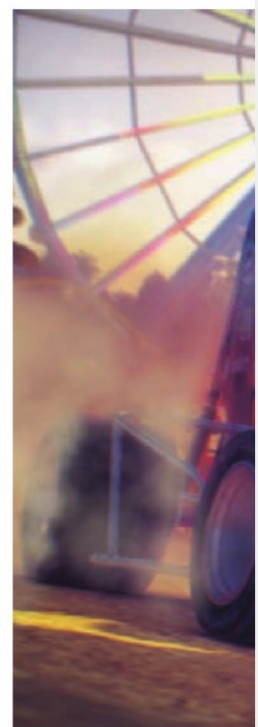
Codemasters is developing *DiRT Showdown* and you can follow its progress at the aptly named codemasters.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Smash-'em-up-styled racing.
- Tons of mini-games alongside full single-player.
- You don't need to be Sébastien Loeb to enjoy it.
- Look him up if you don't know who he is.

READ ME

Turbo-fuelled festival of fun, which steers away from the petrolhead realism of *DiRT* and into other cars for smash-'em-up fun.





● The crashes are jaw-breakingly realistic. Although your jaw won't break. So, you know. Not *that* realistic.



● This is how we play *Gran Turismo 5* as well. We're just awful people when it comes to driving games.



MUSIC TO MY EARS

Dubstep, Nero, Justice, Turbowolf

WE ASKED HOW much dubstep would be in *DiRT: Showdown*, fearing intolerable wubwubwub levels. Iain Smith reassured us with his answer: "Dubstep certainly does feature, but we've broken the music up into a few stylised playlists, so the type of track you're hearing while you play should always suit the mood of that game mode. What will differentiate this soundtrack a little to *DiRT 3* is that we've kept the tempo fairly high throughout, and not to mention that we've included a lot more rock as well, which I'm pretty chuffed about! Turbowolf are my current favourite featured band – their track *A Rose For The Crows* is ideal for thundering around smashing other cars. As I said, though, there's a good mix so expect the likes of Nero and Justice alongside some more rock-influenced acts."

5

INSANE & AMAZING ORIGINS OF ICONIC GAME CHARACTERS

Game characters are just made up by design teams around a boardroom table, right? Think again. We check out five of the maddest game character origins ever

Game characters have become as iconic as any of the leading men and women of Hollywood, or of the music world. After all, who doesn't recognise Mario's bushy moustache and red cap, or Solid Snake's chiselled jaw-line and piss-poor dialogue?

Many of these characters have straight-cut origin stories, but some of the most beloved icons in gaming have bizarre, coincidental or downright insane origin stories that beggar belief. Join us as we explore the maddest of the bunch.



5. GOUKEN

■ As seen in *Street Fighter IV* (Multi, 2009)

Gouken's origin story is interesting as he was actually the by-product of a cruel April Fool's Day hoax way back in 1992. While the Japanese version of *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior* was being ported for the Western market, Ryu's end of battle win quote was horribly mistranslated. Instead of Ryu's original win quote that read, "If you cannot overcome the Rising Dragon Punch, you cannot win!", European and American players were treated to the mysterious quote, "You must defeat Sheng Long to stand a chance."

Seeing the perfect April Fool's opportunity, *EGM* officially 'revealed' the existence of Sheng Long in the cheats section of its April 1992 issue, along with a faked screenshot of him battling against Ryu. The problem was, *EGM* claimed Sheng Long could only be unlocked if the player went through the entire game as Ryu without taking a single hit. The notion that you could get through the game without taking any damage at all is ludicrous enough, but *EGM* then said that players also had to go ten rounds with M Bison without either player hitting each other.

The theory was that Sheng Long would appear, defeat Bison himself, and then take Ryu on in a fight to the death. It was all nonsense of course, but this didn't stop overexcited gamers trying to unlock Sheng Long using this method for months. Feeling guilty at causing such a worldwide uproar, *EGM* issued an overdue apology in December that year.

However, Capcom noticed the impact that the hoax had, and the way fans had responded to the notion of Sheng Long. So, in 2009, Capcom created the *Street Fighter IV* character Gouken, who was modelled on *EGM*'s fake Sheng Long character art, and was depicted as Ryu, Ken and Akuma's mentor.

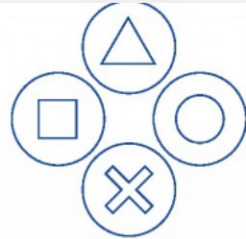


4. PAC-MAN

■ As seen in *Pac-Man* (Arcade, 1980)

If you've ever watched the movie *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World*, then you probably already know half of this story, but it's a great tale regardless. Way back in 1979, fledgling game designer at Namco Toru Iwatani employed a team to develop a new arcade game based around the concept of eating. Pac-Man's shape is always attributed to Iwatani looking at a pizza with a slice missing, although he clarified that Pac-Man's final character design was a combination of the pizza story, and by his attempts at simplifying the Japanese symbol 'kuchi', which means 'mouth'.

Appearance aside, Pac-Man's name is derived from the Japanese slang 'paku-paku', a term that is used to describe the sound made when a person opens and closes their mouth while chewing – which is also perfect inspiration for a character who loves to eat. Iwatani then decided to call his character Pakkuman, and when Midway snapped up conversion rights for the American arcade version in 1980, Namco went for the translated name Puck Man. However, Midway was worried about people vandalising Puck Man arcade cabinets by changing the 'P' in Puck Man to an 'F'. As a compromise, and to avoid any name-based mishaps, both parties settled on the name Pac-Man, and a gaming legend was born.



3. MARIO

■ As seen in *Donkey Kong* (Arcade, 1981)

Mario's story begins with the 1981 smash *Donkey Kong*, and he wasn't originally a plumber, he was a carpenter. Miyamoto wanted to call his new hero 'Mr Video', and have him star in all of his games. Inspired by the runaway success of *Pac-Man*, Miyamoto's original concept for *Donkey Kong* was that the character would have to escape a maze. However, Miyamoto quickly decided to give the hero a leaping ability and soon renamed him 'Jumpman', as he felt 'Mr Video' was a generic name that wouldn't stand the test of time. He wasn't wrong.

So where did the name 'Mario' come from? Back in 1981, an American real estate developer, Mario Seagle, owned the warehouse Nintendo was renting while the company attempted to break the American market. Nintendo was still to find its first real hit and as a result, Nintendo was often late in paying rent, and this was really testing Seagle's patience. The widely told story is that Seagle would often clash with Nintendo and in particular, with Minoru Arakawa, who was president of Nintendo's American arm. After a massive argument with Seagle, Arakawa assured his landlord that he would soon be paid, and Seagle dropped the argument. Miyamoto was said to have smelled a hit with *Donkey Kong*, and, inspired by Nintendo's row with its landlord, changed Jumpman's name to Mario.



2. KIRBY

■ As seen in *Kirby's Dream Land* (Game Boy, 1992)

Another Nintendo entry here, and while Kirby is another example of basic character design, his origin story is surprisingly complex. While the true origin of the character has become muddled over the years, the most incredible version of the tale begins with a fierce legal battle between Nintendo and Universal Studios.

Back in 1981, Nintendo was still a new name in America, and after cutting his teeth on arcade games like *Sheriff* and *Popeye*, a young Shigeru Miyamoto set about creating the concept of *Donkey Kong*. *Donkey Kong* launched in arcades and the public's reaction was immense. However, Universal Studios saw *Donkey Kong* as a trademark infringement on the 1933 movie *King Kong*.

Seeking some sort of retribution and a whopping back-payment in royalties, Universal took Nintendo to court in 1984. At one point, Nintendo's then-lawyer Howard Lincoln was considering a settlement of between five and seven million dollars, but decided to see the case through to the end. Amazingly, Nintendo – this new-kid-on-the-block company from Japan – battered Universal in court, with Judge Robert Sweet ruling that *King Kong* was so old, that it belonged in the public domain and could be adapted by anyone.

Nintendo won, but where does Kirby come in? Enter attorney John Kirby of American legal firm Latham & Watkins – the same man who defended Nintendo in court and won.

It has been said many times that John Kirby's surname was used by Kirby creator Masahiro Sakurai as a thank you for his landmark victory, but these days he claims he can't remember. Still, 'Kirby' is much better than the character's working name 'Popopop.'



1. STRIDER HIRYU

■ As seen in: *Strider* (Arcade, 1989)

If any of the previous origin stories on this page have impressed you, then the creation of Strider Hiryu will surely blow your mind because Strider is the result of a near-death experience. In 1986, *Strider* creator Kouichi 'Ishu' Yotsui started his career as a background illustrator at Capcom to pay off student debts. Yotsui tried to pitch ideas for games to his bosses, but was turned down constantly. But his big break came when Capcom decided to create a new series called *Strider*, which would be spread across a manga comic series, NES title and an arcade game.

Capcom placed Yotsui in charge of conceptualising the *Strider* arcade game, and his team started bringing ideas together. Strider, however, might not have ended up as the death-defying ninja agent gamers know today if it were not for Yotsui almost getting himself killed on a freezing cold night in 1988.

Speaking with *Play's* sister (and much older) magazine *Retro Gamer* in a rare interview, Yotsui explained that he went up to the roof of Capcom's building to "reflect on his mood". But in doing so, the access door locked behind him and he was trapped.

In real danger of freezing to death, Yotsui was stranded on top of an impossibly tall building in a noisy city.

Without a mobile phone (it was 1988, after all) and with no one to hear his cries for help, Yotsui was in trouble. In desperation, he started climbing down the side of the icy building to reach a nearby fire escape. Amazingly, Yotsui actually made it to the stairway unscathed and lived to put the climbing element of his experience into *Strider*, and with it, created one of the most fundamental traits of his most iconic creation.

Go to www.NowGamer.com for games features, developer interviews and up-to-the-minute gaming news.



HITMAN

ABSOLUTION

Controversy, child molesters and... wigs? Game director Tore Blystad talks everything Hitman in an exclusive interview

In 2006 IO Interactive released a demo for the latest entry into its successful stealth series, *Hitman: Blood Money*. Fine in theory: fans were clamouring for a chance to not only see the new game in action, but to play it. *Blood Money* promised big changes to the series, and now, finally, the fans would get a chance to see them in action.

Or not. The demo was terrible: not only was it incredibly linear (it was the tutorial mission, crudely sliced out of the full game and served to players without context) but it was also *timed*. After a certain amount of play, the demo would reset. It was a stupid error, and one that publisher Eidos scrambled to rectify with a non-timed demo.

Fast-forward five years and IO's knack for underwhelming first impressions rears its bald head again. *Hitman: Absolution*? *Splinter Cell: Conviction*, cried the internet, following the action-packed debut trailer. Is this clumsy marketing borne out of a desire to bring *Hitman* under the noses of the FPS crowd, as *Mass Effect 3* did?

"We know for a fact that most people playing the *Hitman* games prefer to do so in a 'professional' way, playing up to the fantasy of being a silent assassin," explains game director Tore Blystad. "We have created a very advanced AI to cater for exactly this kind of voyeuristic, professional approach. On the other hand, things can go bad and if the player is in a bad spot where the AI is on to him there needs to be a quick and efficient way of dealing with that."

Part of that isn't necessarily tooling Agent 47 up but dialling the difficulty down, which was notoriously harsh in previous *Hitman* games and almost served as part of the appeal to fans. "We have been working a lot on trying to soften up the unforgiving nature of the old *Hitman*

games where the AI would instantly spot the player doing something illegal and gun them down on sight," Blystad continues. "Adding improved gunplay is a natural step as it fits into both the fantasy and believability of the franchise. After all, Agent 47 is a genetically enhanced assassin, among the best in his field, surely he knows everything about gunplay and can kill with any weapon. For us it is not about changing the franchise focus towards a more action-oriented approach, but about adding more tools to the player's toolbox and providing a natural evolution to how Agent 47 looks and feels."

It's a fair explanation, even if we don't quite believe Agent 47 can kill with any weapon – surely even *he* can't carve his way through a heavily armed estate with little more than a Swiss Army knife and hearty 'good luck!' pat on the back – but that's besides the point. The backlash was fierce and when news emerged that there was also no Jesper Kyd (soundtrack), no Vivienne McKee (voice actress of *Hitman*'s handler, Diana) and no David Bateson (voice of Agent 47 himself), the anger only grew louder. Blystad says the feedback since the debut trailer is "generally very positive" but also notes the "anticipated hesitation from the hardcore community", simply because there were so many changes to take in quickly.

"*Absolution* is a large game with more mechanics than any other games we have done," Blystad explains. "It is the most ambitious title we have ever done, with new bespoke technology to cater for the best *Hitman* experience we have ever delivered. We are very excited to share more code in the near future and are confident that will create a lot of excitement not only among our loyal fans, but to every gamer around the globe." >

HITMAN: ABSOLUTION





THE BIG CHANGES

Since making its debut in 2000 with *Hitman: Codename 47*, the series has undergone many changes – some obvious, others subtle but no less important – to the core stealth template. Here **Play** tracks the evolution and innovation of gaming's most popular assassin



MID-MISSION SAVES HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

Hitman: Codename 47 had wonderful ideas marred by poor execution. None are more frustrating than the lack of mid-mission saves given how long the missions are and how likely you were to make fatal mistakes. *Hitman 2* rectified this: on the harder difficulties they're still absent, but for everyone else this was a far more enjoyable way to experience the game.



REWORKED STALKING HITMAN: CONTRACTS

While *Hitman 2* was the game that finally made the series palatable, it still suffered from poor design choices. One of the more aggravating examples is 47's overthought stalking mechanics – with two buttons dedicated to different movement speeds it could be confusing as to which one to use. Not good when you need to silently garrote a guard before he turns back around. Unsurprisingly *Contracts* combined these onto a single button and upped movement speed, maintaining tension but increasing playability.



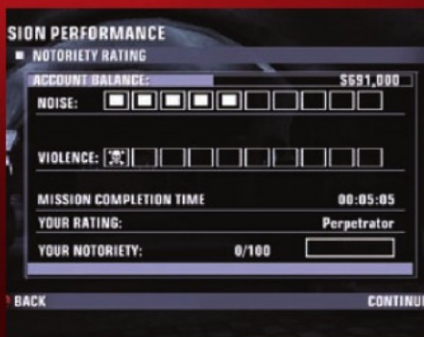
CLOSE-QUARTERS COMBAT HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

With *Contracts* more of a sidestep for the series than a full-blown expansion of the idea it fell to 2006's *Blood Money* to make the leap. It did so in fine style, introducing many mechanics for the franchise to build upon. CQC is one of the most important of these. Now 47 could use his fists (outside of *Hitman 2*'s 'Ali Mode' cheat), disarm foes and even take them hostage. After messing around with the weak pistol-whipping of previous games this was a welcome addition, finally making 47 into the killer he always should have been.



ACCIDENTS HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

The perfect hit is the one that appears to be an accident, and *Blood Money* embraced this idea with vigour. Pianos dropping on heads, faulty chandeliers, prop pistols accidentally being replaced with real ones, drunks falling over balconies. All these and many more were available options to the professional Silent Assassin in *Blood Money*, making for a game that challenged you to kill without personally using violence. It shaped that title's gameplay so much that you didn't need to take weapons into certain levels, and this smart, flexible design must return in *Absolution*.



NOTORIETY/MONEY HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

Okay, so this isn't as big a change as it could have been, but it's something we'd love to see expanded upon. *Blood Money* introduced cash to the series, giving players more dosh the better they did. This could then be used to upgrade your weapons and equipment (faster lock-picking? Yes, please) and remove your notoriety. All but the best assassins would leave a clue: an alert, leaving your suit behind, being seen on camera. You could pay to have this tidied up by the agency, with the idea being that the more notorious you were the harder missions would be. The system wasn't sophisticated enough to actually do this, but it's something we want to see expanded upon.





> And let's not get fancy about this – there are a lot of changes. The biggest is the introduction of Instinct, an alternative vision mode of sorts which flags up objects of interest nearby and enemy patrol routes. It's an easy change to explain, particularly following Blystad's reason of softening the difficulty, as players had to feel their way through *Hitman*'s maze-like levels with experimentation and trial and error, both of which usually resulted in death. If *Hitman* is a puzzle game rather than a stealth game, as you piece together the layout, the disguises, the environment and your eventual, successful plan, then it makes sense to have a vision mode which enables that. Besides which, obligatory disclaimer, it's entirely optional.

Of more concern is the change from open-ended levels to relatively linear A-to-B affairs, punctuated by a

strengthened focus on the gunplay and cover shooting. The funnel-neck design is the antithesis of *Absolution*'s predecessor *Hitman: Blood Money*, which had open levels and also featured what looked like the early workings of a mission hub of sorts in Agent 47's apartment. Did IO Interactive ever consider building on that idea of having a mission hub?

"It would definitely make sense in an assassination fantasy to work from a hub, but as *Hitman: Absolution* is very much about telling a personal story about Agent 47 and him driving the story forward

Now the emphasis is on the story, so how can IO Interactive top the ending of *Blood Money*? With Agent 47 assassinating Diana, the handler who so brilliantly navigated the duo out of danger. It's a brave move but what happened between the two? What went wrong?

IO Interactive isn't saying, but when *Kane & Lynch 2* comes up in conversation, specifically referring to the brave design decisions there and whether the industry is too immature for convention to be challenged that strongly, Blystad issues a fierce defence.

“As a player you should never be put in a situation where you have to kill an innocent person, but there might be a certain twinkle of doubt if the person deserves it...”

himself the level structure is built around the story,” says Blystad.

Ah yes, the story. *Blood Money* followed the rise and fall of Agent 47 and his handler Diana, as he becomes a legendary hitman hired for increasingly complex assassinations, culminating in notoriety and a mission at the White House. Well, not quite ending there. The conclusion of *Hitman: Blood Money* was his apparent death at the hands of a poison syringe used by Diana, with the canon ending seeing us overlooking Agent 47 lying lifeless in his coffin. Diana kisses him and the serum on her lips brings the assassin back to life, as he gets revenge on those hunting him down, who are present at his funeral. It's a brilliant twist.

"I don't think it is about being immature," he explains. "*Kane & Lynch 2* describes a hazardous journey of two messed-up criminals and the game mechanics and art style were specifically designed in order to reflect that frantic feeling of bad turning worse on their slide through the Shanghai underworld. This was an approach to game design similar to movies like *Cloverfield* or *Blair Witch Project*, and those titles had the same biased audience reaction to what *Kane & Lynch 2* has received. Where some people think it is very annoying and ruining the experience, the idea was to make it look 'authentic'. If you like and understand that, then you can fully appreciate it, where other people might perceive it as flawed." >



● Gunplay is now a valid option rather than last resort.

> This leads to the inevitable discussion over morals. We've already seen the assassin escaping pursuit by busting through a room of those enjoying 'certain substances' and not recognising Agent 47 as a trained killer, inviting him to join in. It makes the innocent bystanders more sympathetic than the usual bland faces who you don't think twice about killing. But what about the bad guys themselves? We've killed child molesters, drug dealers and murderers in previous *Hitman* games. Is there room for assassination targets who aren't evil in a black and white sense?

"It is interesting that you mention this as it has been a theme for us to develop the 'bad guys' of *Absolution* into being more human than previous *Hitman* games," says Blystad. "The way we tell the story in *Absolution* enables us to give the targets more screen time and more back story so that when the player encounters them he has a more diverse understanding of them. As a player you will and should never be put in a situation where you have to kill an innocent person,

but there might be a certain twinkle of doubt if the person 'deserves' it or not."

So let's switch from serious high-brow chit-chat and chin-stroking to something more fun. Outfits! Disguises! And wigs! We've always had a theory that wigs would make *Hitman* better. Blystad says it's actually a possibility: "We have had many discussions about impersonation and disguises and where we wanted to take it with *Absolution*. Wigs have been up and turning many times but that would require a certain preparational step unless it's like the clown's disguise in *Blood Money* where the wig comes with the costume. As most disguises are found on the levels as 47 progresses it does not make as much sense.. However, there will actually be some wigs in *Absolution*, but probably not in the way that you predict!"



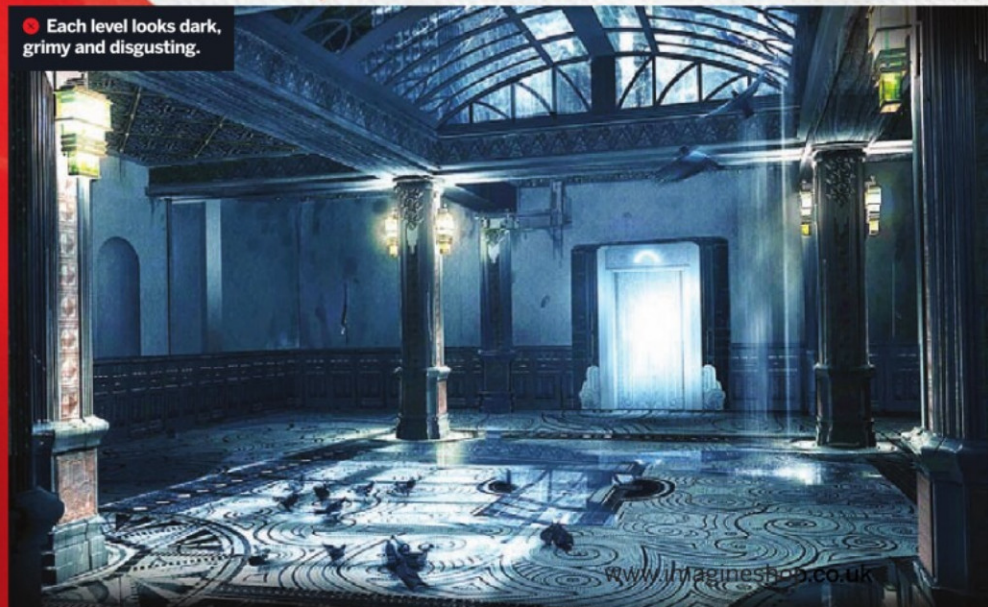
Wigs or not (and we really, sincerely, genuinely hand-on-our-fat-hearts hope they're in), Agent 47 has a number of new tricks to make sure he stays as stealthy as possible while moving through *Absolution*'s levels. It might seem like a purely offensive action, but the ability to take down enemies by grabbing environmental objects (such as statue busts and, erm, bongos) enables you to quickly and easily neutralise a threat. Compare it to having to pull out fibre wire, drawing your pistol or trying to get a cheeky head-butt in and it's obvious that this ostensibly action-focused move has bountiful defensive properties.

It's an important addition, because IO has implemented a new system to give players a chance when suspicion falls on them. Now the game will feature 'eyewitnesses': AI that spots you're up to no good and will quickly move to alert their friends. Neutralise that threat and you're still in business. It's not a new >

• While linear, there's still time for impressive views.



• Each level looks dark, grimy and disgusting.



• You can move around restricted areas in disguise.

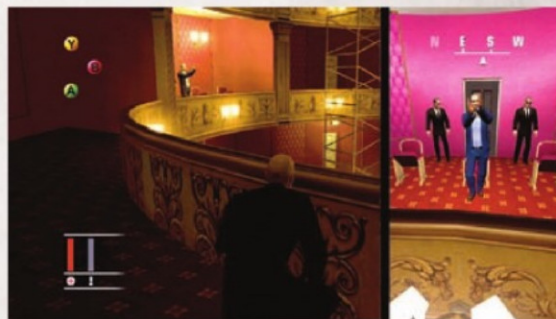


THE PERFECT HIT

Hitman: Blood Money never made it to PlayStation 3 but as the most recent Hitman outing, we show how a typical assassination played out...

THE TARGET

This second mission, Curtains Down, has two targets. One is opera singer and alleged child trafficker **Alvaro D'Alvade**. The other is American diplomat **Richard Delahunt**, who maintains a creepy fascination with Alvaro and watches him on stage from one of the VIP boxes. Decisions, decisions.



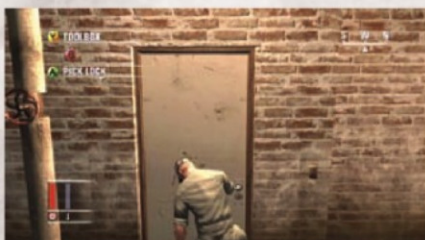
STEP 1

As in most *Hitman* games, speaking to certain NPCs can yield interesting results. Speak to the coat-check cop at the start and he'll give you a coat left by the agency. In that coat is a pistol you'll need later.



STEP 2

To the right of the coat check is a toilet. Wait there until a construction worker wearing green overalls walks in and uses the cubicle, and then use a sedative on him. Steal his clothes and toolbox and toss his body in the bin so no one accidentally stumbles across the body.



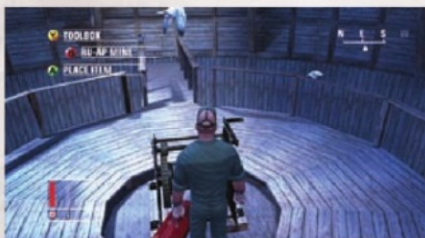
STEP 3

With your disguise on, you're free to saunter around more areas without raising suspicion. Eventually, you need to pick a lock. If you're caught doing this, you're in trouble – watching your surroundings is key to success in *Hitman*.



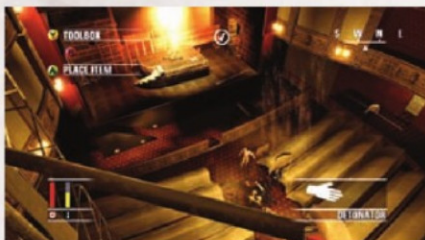
STEP 4

Run to the end of the next hall, hang a right and then left through the double doors to the dressing room area. Wait until D'Alvade's co-star heads to the toilet, then sneak into his dressing room. Replace his stage pistol with the real pistol. You can probably guess where this is going by now.



STEP 5

Avoid the agent and go through the double doors pictured above. Climb the staircase until you find a room with a winching mechanism. Attach your mine to it and head down the ladder beyond the winch. You'll find yourself overlooking the stage...



STEP 6

After what seems like a lifetime D'Alvade and his co-star will leave the stage and return. Wait until the co-star fires the real pistol, killing your target, and when a distraught Delahunt races to the stage detonate the bomb and drop the chandelier on him. What a terrible tragedy! Now get out of there...

OR YOU COULD...

Most Hitmen of a certain calibre will use the approach detailed on the left, but it takes a certain type of killer to do it this way. Upgrade your default pistol with a sight and Magnum ammo, and pick the lock of the door on the right of Delahunt's guarded room. From here fire quickly and accurately on both targets and run straight out of the exit, which is also where you started. Quick and efficient, this method can see you clock the level in a blazing 15 seconds.



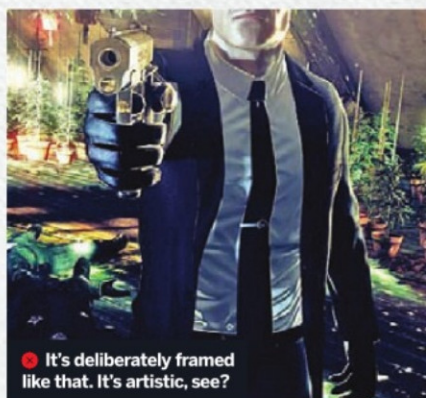
OR YOU COULD...

Let's face it, D'Alvade is a nasty dude, and should probably be made to see his killer coming and beg for mercy. If you're so inclined you can simply sneak into his dressing room – wait until the SS agent goes to the toilet – and blow his brains out. Use the silenced pistol for bonus cool points. You'll still have to deal with the other target, but there's something satisfying – and very *Hitman* – about sneaking into and out of his room undetected while his guard is outside.



OR YOU COULD...

All of the options on the left require some amount of guile, but this one is for pros only. Sneak into the co-star's dressing room, sedate him, and take his clothes and the prop pistol. Now head onto the stage and act out the play before killing D'Alvade with the pistol at the appropriate point. What you do with Delahunt is up to you, but for ultimate badassery drop a mine on the stage in the confusion and detonate it when he gets there.



> system: *Metal Gear Solid 2* was doing it over ten years ago, but it's a welcome change from the sometimes-illogical AI of the previous games.

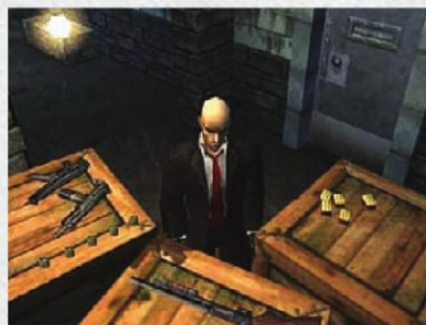
We've already seen a little example of this, when Agent 47 pulls up the collar on his coat to avoid detection, and it's touches like these that help to calm fears that this is going to be a straight-up action game with a sprinkling of stealth on top. Huge *Hitman* fans we are, but there's been a big change in the way gamers approach stealth since the last *Hitman* game came out: both *Assassin's Creed* and Rocksteady's *Batman* games are now held up as the benchmarks on how to successfully integrate stealth into an overall experience.

This includes the rise of multiplayer modes forced into games for the sake of adding another marketing bulletpoint to the back of the box and, fortunately, this is something Blystad confirms is not a part of *Hitman: Absolution*: "In the concept phase of *Absolution* we were looking into different modes, but as we did not want to make a tacked-on multiplayer we decided that 47 still works alone."

Even so, with the likes of *Arkham City* dominating critical and commercial platforms, is it any surprise *Hitman* has morphed into what it is? Agent 47 may be far more powerful than before, but only because the previous engine couldn't support these improvements: if IO is to be believed then you'd already be doing these things in previous games if it could. If *Absolution* manages to create similarly bountiful environments to explore and use for whichever play style you choose, then regardless of whether wigs make it in or not, we certainly can't argue with that. ☒

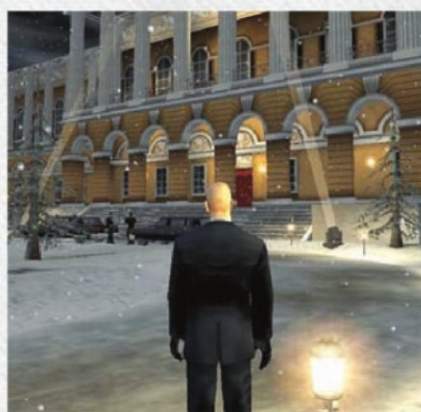


HISTORY OF HITMAN



HITMAN: CODENAME 47

The PC-only original was long on promise, short on delivery. A buggy initial release in 2000 was compounded by the lack of mechanical finesse, with stealth elements overlooked and mid-mission saves missing. As a marker, however, it was perfect, showing the developer exactly what to do with any potential sequel, and despite its flaws it was well loved.

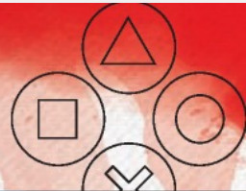


HITMAN 2

Reviewed: 95 Score: 91%

What we said: "All the thrill of playing as a bald man who knows how to use many weapons."

The first *Hitman* game on console, *Silent Assassin* fixed *Codename 47*'s various problems and created a new stealth icon. Over 21 missions, each with diverse objectives and varied kills, helped to create one of PS2's finest titles. It's also the *Hitman* title that focuses the most on 47's relationship between his personal life and his job.



PS3 SHATTERING TECHNOLOGY

G2-Crowd Technology. Pretty dull name, right? We'd have gone for Gigamegaton People Populator Thing BOOM 6000. Yet regardless of name, this is powerful stuff technology that will make your PS3 bleed with pain. "Please!" it will cry. "Please go back to playing *Warriors Orochi 3*, I liked that game, it was easy!" Shut up PS3 and do as you're bloody told.

This isn't new territory for IO Interactive. *Hitman: Blood Money* had its sweating, heaving mass of Mardi Gras revellers for Agent 47 to push through while *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men* had its Tokyo nightclub, which scattered when gunshots were fired. Now in *Hitman: Absolution* we have a party in Chinatown. It's not too surprising given the teaser website for *Hitman: Absolution* hinted at Chinese themes but what is surprising is the technology here can support up to 1,200 NPCs. Good luck finding your target in that heaving mass of people.



HITMAN: CONTRACTS

Reviewed: 116 **Score:** 93%

What we said: "A wonderful game that, although not too far from its prequels, takes the series to new heights."

Using flashbacks to delve into some of 47's prior hits, *Contracts* wasn't a great leap forward, but its gameplay refinements and more brutal tone made for an affecting journey into 47's dark world. It was also here that IO began to experiment with having hits take place in crowded places, which would reach its zenith in *Blood Money*.



HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

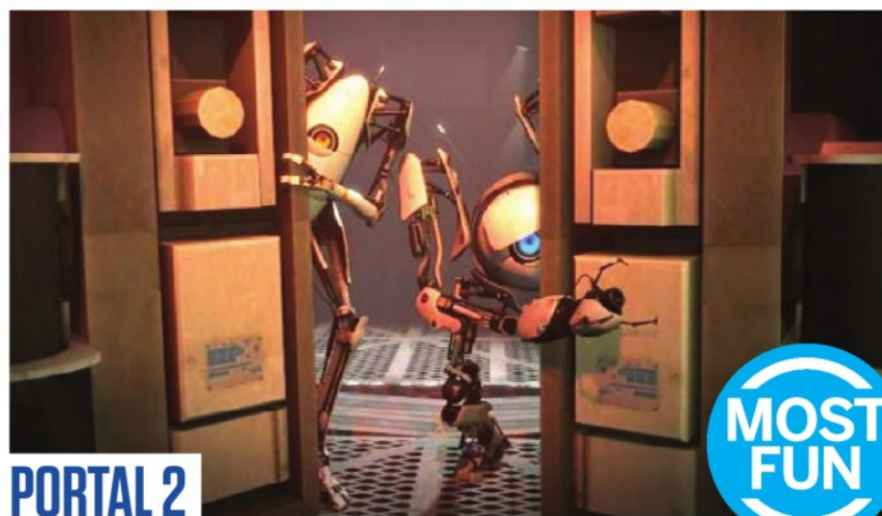
Reviewed: 140 **Score:** 80%

What we said: "Sticks to its formula, slapping enough new locations and ways to go about earning your blood money to keep you playing."

Blood Money's only Sony appearance was for PS2, with the *Hitman* outing also showing up on Xbox 360. Told via a series of flashbacks, the awkward release between console generations was apparent through stiff animation and presentation but the deadly gameplay was still a killer.

PLAY'S GUIDE TO THE BEST FREE PLAYSTATION DLC

Want to get the most out of your games without spending a penny? Of course you do. We all want to save money for more important things in life, like new socks and Pot Noodles. This, dear friends of Play, is how...



PORTAL 2

■ Peer Review

Play *Portal 2* without a headset and have fun with its unique co-op as you scream, shout and kick the screen in frustration because BOOGERMAN69 is shooting portals at the ceiling rather than hitting the switch you're swearing at him about. So hey, let's relive it all over again! 'Peer Review' is a free co-op jaunt and worth the time it takes to download it, if not the emotional anger at other players and what they do/don't do. ★★★★★



STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN

■ Mega Man and Pac-Man

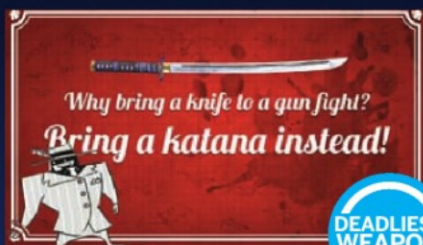
They're on the disc but they're also greyed out unless you head to PlayStation Store and grab the free download key from there. You're rewarded with a fat Mega Man and Mokujin-riding Pac-Man for your efforts. Fun characters, if a little stunted when competing with the rest of the cast, the comedy value alone makes them worth it. ★★★★★



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

■ Myths and Mavericks

If you think you'll ever bother with *Red Dead* multiplayer, you need this DLC. Eight brand-new locations for multiplayer and four extra stronghold and shootout areas are good but that's not what we love about this DLC. You also get eight new characters for multiplayer including the brilliantly named Uncle. Any free DLC with a character called Uncle jumps to the top of your must-download list. ★★★★★



GOATHAM CITY IMPOSTORS

■ 25th Floor Level, Pistols, Katanas

You get a little bit of everything with the DLC for the grammatically challenged *Gotham City Impostors*. You get the new 25th Floor map for multiplayer, pistols are added to your arsenal and, best of all, you get katanas as well. These slice up other players, as expected, and also enable you to block bullets. ★★★★★

DEADLIEST WEAPON



BRÜTAL LEGEND

■ Tears of the Hextadon

For those who stuck with the Jack Black game months after it launched, Double Fine released two free maps for the multiplayer modes – Death's Fjord and Circle of Tears, which also describes how we felt when it switched from guitar-wielding action-adventure to head-scratching RTS. There was also a free axe, the Blade of Ormagoden. ★★★★★



BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

■ Batman Incorporated Costume

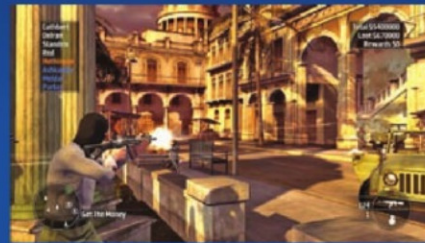
Remember cheat codes? That's what used to happen until publishers realised you could charge 79p for access to the 'Level 8000 Dudebro Cannon' or whatever. Not all games have ditched the practice. Press ←, ←, ↓, ↓, ←, ←, →, ↑, ↑, ↓ on *Arkham City*'s title screen and you will unlock the Batman Incorporated costume. Neat. ★★★★★



L.A. NOIRE

■ Chicago Piano

Because Cole Phelps is too busy paying for his therapy sessions to stop him randomly shouting at peopWHERE WERE YOU LAST NIGHT YOU SON OF A BITCH I KNOW YOU MURDERED HER Rockstar decided to make the Chicago Piano free. It's a weapon found in the game's police cars by the way, not a conduit to Phelps playing silky smooth jazz to calm himself down. ★★★★★



KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN

■ Dope Bag

Dead Men's often-overlooked multiplayer was lucky enough to have its online community boosted by the arrival of Dope Bag, which included four maps – Clean Cut, Hooker's Trail, Flying High and Hasta La Vista. The online community is long dead so there's no point downloading it now, as it doesn't even have Trophies. But hey, if you know anyone with a copy... ★★★★★



PRO EVO 2012

■ Champions League Ball

It's not a free DLC feature/item/thingymajig. Instead, Konami loaded a free patch with plenty of updates and fun stuff for free. Alongside expected roster updates you also get the new kits for the Spanish, Japanese and German sides, eight new boot styles from Adidas and Nike and the matchball that will be used in the Champions League final. ★★★★★



TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED 2

■ Exploration Pack 1

The game itself is, to flex our superior command of the Queen's English, a bit pump. This free DLC is incredible, though, and sets the right example to other studios on how it's done – 20 new events including new event types, three Discovery levels, new outfit for men and women, two new cars (Lancia Stratos version Rallye and Dodge Charger 1969) and 3D functionality. ★★★★★

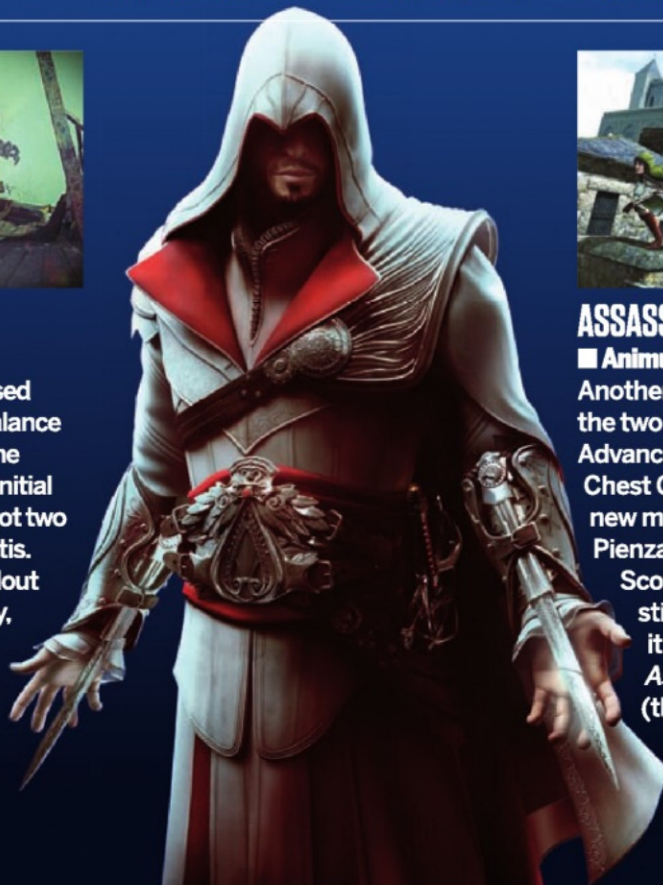
BIGGEST DOWNLOAD



RESISTANCE 3

■ Creek and Granary

Along with a patch that addressed matchmaking problems and balance issues (anyone remembering the shotgun-fest of *Resistance 3*'s initial weeks will know why), we also got two multiplayer maps thrown in gratis. Creek and Granary aren't standout maps in terms of design but hey, they're free, they're good enough, everyone else is playing on them so you might as well join them. ★★★★★



ASSASSIN'S CREED: BROTHERHOOD

■ Animus Project Update 1.0 and 2.0

Another free multiplayer bonus, the two free updates grant you the Advanced Alliance game mode, Chest Capture game mode and new maps Mont Saint-Michel and Pienza, along with the Templar Score feature. For free! There are still plenty of people playing it because it's better than *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* (that's right, we went there) so get stuck in. ★★★★★



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

■ Makin At Night

A free multiplayer playground to run around in, it's the popular Makin map but, get this, at night! Woah. Though you probably guessed that from the name. What you won't know is that the tide has gone out on one side of the map, opening up more access routes, while the night-time setting makes it less sniper-friendly and the rocks at the back more viable. Not bad given it costs you nothing except your time. ★★★★★

BEST MAP



BLACK OPS 2 WILL FAIL UNLESS IT FIXES 10 FATAL FLAWS

01 NOT ENOUGH INTERACTION

Call Of Duty: Black Ops is an assault on the senses as you're hurtled through a host of dazzling sights and sounds. Explosions! Helicopters crashing! Fire! Shouting men! The compromise is you have to keep your hands in the train at all times, the design cutting off any attempts at interaction. The result? The game's environments are sterile. They fizz with gorgeous effects yet you can't interact with the world or impact the world around you, leaving your influence null and void.

■ **This pushes the need for a new engine but it's an absolute must for *Black Ops 2* to feel exciting.**

02 ZOMBIES MODE TAKES TOO LONG

It's been one of the big success stories for Treyarch, which has created the best variant of the Horde mode extra. But it's a bit... well... it's a bit *long*. The early waves with a few zombies pottering about and pea-shooter weapons are dull. It's those later manic waves that really earned Zombies mode its rep. Not only would speeding up those early waves allow us to get to the chaos sooner but also cut down on the potential that disruptive, impatient players have to ruin the game.

■ **An option for smaller levels with chaotic waves early on would be ideal to speed up the pace.**

03 SPAWN SYSTEM IS RANDOM & UNFAIR

We don't know how to fix it because if we were developers, we'd be sweating in a Santa Monica office surrounded by empty Mountain Dew cans, colouring in the trees on level three and not writing this. Spawn points aren't fixed – they rotate around the map depending on where the enemies are. Maybe the algorithms need tweaking or a spawn-on-team-mate system needs implementing or the trees on level three need to be a different colour. Either way, fix it.

■ **Too often players spawn into a crossfire of bullets, explosions and death. This has to change.**

04 STORY SHOULD NOT DOMINATE

The big twist in *Black Ops* is that Reznov isn't real. Gasp! The story was that Alex Mason was programmed to kill John F Kennedy but Reznov reprogrammed him to kill Dragovich instead, and you kill Dragovich but you also might have killed Kennedy and... sigh. It's a shooty bang bang game. It doesn't need to be a massive conspiracy with twists and turns, where the writing has a higher chance of falling flat on its face than succeeding. It needs clarity and shouldn't be the focus.

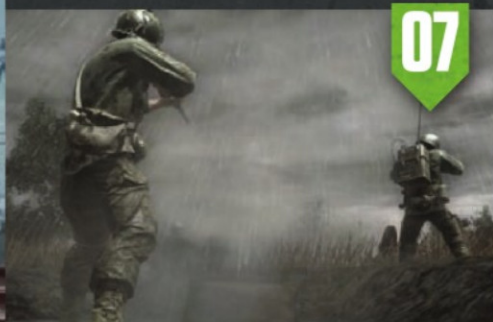
■ **Keep the story focused and clear. You need to know what you're fighting for before you can care.**

05 KILLSTREAKS ARE UNBALANCED

The defining feature of *Call Of Duty* is slowly becoming the albatross weighing the series down. The balance still isn't there yet. *MW2* handed you nukes, *Black Ops* gives you a little RC car. Obviously it's not that black and white – we know you need 25 kills for the nuke – but the point is the right balance between killstreaks empowering you and killstreaks dominating the match hasn't been cracked. *Modern Warfare 3* had the right idea, so more evolution along those lines would work.

■ **An early beta to help figure out the balance is an essential rather than a nice marketing bulletpoint.**

BLACK OPS 2 WILL FAIL



06 KNIFING IS FAR TOO STRONG

It's not as bad as *Modern Warfare 2* where a Tactical Knife and Commando perk meant you could Dhalsim-teleport around the map knife-first but the old panic knife still existed in *Black Ops*. You know – turn a corner, someone's there, ARGH, instinctive knife swipe that kills him. The width combined with the lock-on, which means you can knife with no real thought beyond a panicked stab of **R3** and kill your target. Even if a fraction of skill was required, that would help.

■ Reduce the width of the knife's hitbox (if not the range) so players need to aim rather than react.

07 IT NEEDS CO-OP CAMPAIGN MODE

Because you're just one player in *Call Of Duty*, it's easy for Infinity Ward and Treyarch to weave the world around your actions and place trigger points for set pieces and cut-scenes depending on where you are and what you do. Introduce another player into the mix and it'll go haywire, with player two triggering the big collapsing building set piece while player one is at the start of the level shooting the ground. It's a challenge, sure, but one that Treyarch shouldn't shy away from.

■ The token co-op effort in *World At War* was strangely redundant. Treyarch has to go balls in and do it properly.

08 SETTING DOESN'T FEEL AUTHENTIC

The Vietnam setting for *Black Ops* was a good start but it still wasn't quite as atmospheric or unique as it could have been. We liked the music, the fonts and the cute visual touches but we still weren't fully sold by the setting (Woods looking like *Tropical Thunder*'s Tugg Speedman didn't help). Here's a controversial idea – how about revisiting World War II shooters as no one else is doing them any more? Treyarch seemed to have more confidence with that setting.

■ Whatever Treyarch decides, it has to push for authenticity to convince the player of the setting.

09 NOT NEARLY ENOUGH VARIETY

All Ghillied Up in *Call Of Duty 4* is held up as the greatest mission in the series. It's easy to see why. While the series is thought of as a wham-bam shoot-'em-up, All Ghillied Up was about restraint. You had to stay undetected, pick off guards with sniper fire, hide in the long grass as tanks rolled by, make your escape after taking a single shot. Where did the variety go? We've seen different ways of the destruction being delivered but the pacing and missions have remained the same.

■ We're not asking for a karting mini-game but something tonally or mechanically different

10 360 VERSION IS ALWAYS BETTER

In an ideal world both versions would be the same. They're not. The Xbox 360 version has always looked a fraction better and had a less tumultuous time online as far as matchmaking and hackers went. Fire up *Call Of Duty 4*'s multiplayer to see the proof. So Treyarch, make the versions as close as humanly possible. Treat them both with care. If one version falls behind, quickly prop it back up so both versions are equal. We're not asking preferential treatment. Just parity.

■ Treat them the same and come up with stronger counter-hacking measures to ward off the trolls.

CAN BLACK OPS 2 AVOID FAILURE?

IT SEEMS LIKE an overly negative question to ask but if we're being frank, it's also a realistic one. There's been a huge, public backlash against the *Call Of Duty* series among fans and forums alike, so there's clearly something that needs to be addressed. *Modern Warfare 3* saw sales for *Call Of Duty* merely meet previous success rather than set new records, so there is proof the series is slowing down. It needs a fresh injection of ideas, innovation, purpose and drive and that time is now before it drives its fanbase away forever.



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REVIEWS

We play games and give them a score



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Silent Hill: Downpour

They mostly come at night. Mostly

PS3

Outside of the Vatra Games development team and their mothers, there wasn't a whole lot of hope for *Silent Hill: Downpour*. The last PS3 instalment, developed by fellow Western studio Double Helix, hadn't exactly dazzled. Old dev Team Silent were scattered to the winds, the new developer was made up of a bunch of nobodies, and famed series composer Akira Yamaoka had finally bailed. Which, after participating in some of the nonsense that followed the mesmeric *Silent Hill 2*, surely meant that this was going to bear as much resemblance to *Grange Hill* as it was *Silent*.

These worries are unfounded. *Silent Hill: Downpour* is impressive in almost every regard. It can't match *Silent Hill 2*, but don't worry about that. Not a lot can.

What *Downpour* can do, though, is take the *Silent Hill* template – dreamlike unease, the creeping, nameless dread, blinding fog, surreal imagery – and make it seem appealing for the first time in years.

Most of this is down to the fact that Vatra has absolutely nailed the look of the game, and as such got the 'feel' down in the process. *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories* on Wii drew rave reviews for its unusual narrative structure, but there's no doubt that its last-gen look harmed the game's impact.



DETAILS

Publisher
Konami
Developer
Vatra Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Survival horror
Age Rating
18
Website
www.konami.com/games/sh
Twitter
[@Konami](https://twitter.com/Konami)
Facebook
facebook.com/konami



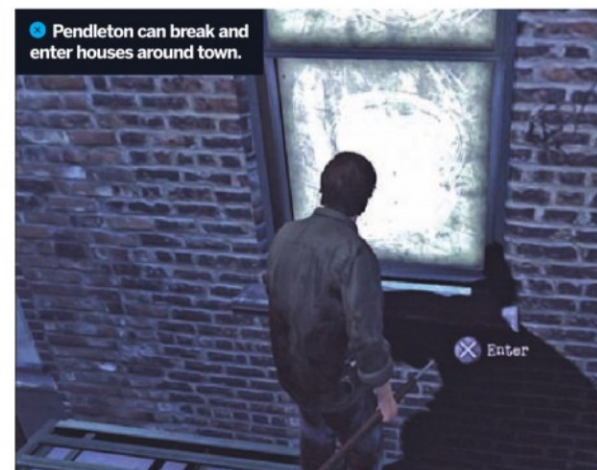
No such worries here: *Downpour*'s HD art direction is exemplary, with muted blues and greys (and dirty browns) bleeding together to create environments that feel both empty and oppressive, open and claustrophobic. After an assured, deftly directed opening couple of hours or so that see main character Murphy Pendleton escape from his prison transport into the quasi-real town of Silent Hill, *Downpour* really hits its stride.

Running around fog-ridden streets in the pouring rain, exploring a gigantic municipal building, poking around a ruined orphanage: each is as pleasingly disorientating as the last, making for a rare instance in modern gaming where the player is as confused as the character. He's you, you're him, and you're both desperate to get out of town.

It makes for a deeply unsettling experience, doubly so when you consider that it's defiantly old-school in its gameplay. This is true survival horror: firearms and health packs are a rarity, weapons need to be appropriated from what's around you (and they will break), your surroundings need to be investigated for clues and tools to help you progress.

There's no handholding here. It's possible to become 'stuck', either on a puzzle or in the game's well-designed, pleasingly non-linear environments, a situation made all the worse by a well worked, disturbing story that drags you through the game.

Frustrating, especially when certain puzzles don't appear to follow any real logical path. That said, not many modern games can boast that 'ah, that's it!' moment of clarity when they tell you how to do everything, all the time. It's an inelegant middle ground, but in a perverse way plays into the game's surreal appeal. Also, in fairness, you can adjust the puzzle difficulty.

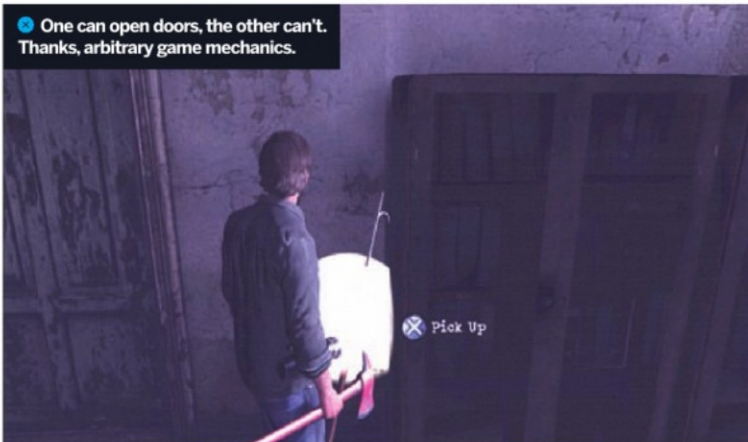


Less forgivable is the game's combat, which is extremely poor. There's nothing fundamentally wrong with the idea of using everyday items – chairs, beer bottles, fire axes and so on – in a desperate bid to fend off foes. When those enemies are poorly designed, however, it all falls apart, and this is the case. Encounter design is spotty, character design poor, attack patterns rote and uninvolved.

We'd have preferred *Downpour* took a leaf out of *Shattered Memories*' book and did away with the combat altogether, forcing players to imagine their foes lurking in the corner of their vision. It's not gamebreaking, as most fights can be avoided, but it's fairly laughable stuff.

Also rearing its ugly head are arbitrary mechanics that see you needing specific weapons to open different doors/access different areas. Fire axes open boarded up doors, but can't be used to pull down a fire escape because, er, we don't know. Instead you have to find a boat hook to do it. A bloody boat hook.

Both of these elements feel like tacked-on, box-ticking nonsense designed to extend





TOUCH OF CLASS

Vatra's done its homework

THE SILENT HILL series is more about atmosphere and dread than straight-out scares, and Vatra has sought to amplify *The Fear* with a series of small but significant design choices. Pressing **L1** sees the camera rotate to look over Murphy's shoulder. Generally there's not anyone there, but it's effective enough regardless. Other nice touches include the camera snapping close to Murphy's shoulder when he uses the lighter, simulating players peering into the small amount of light it gives off. Finally, even when injured and hobbling Murphy will give off a little burst of desperate speed to get away from close enemies. Cranking the tension up even more, they're all welcome inclusions.



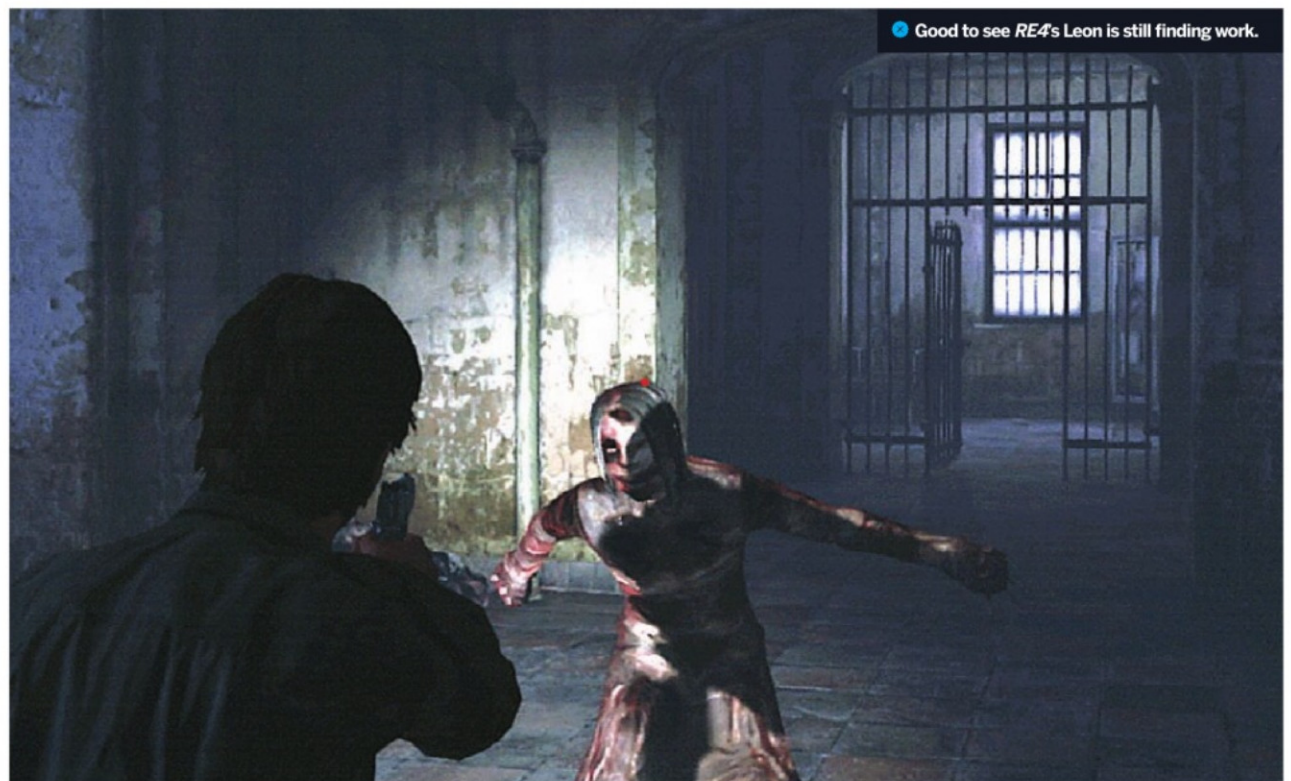
the experience artificially. *Downpour* doesn't need to do any of this. When it's playing to its strengths it's a fabulous ride, intimidating in its atmosphere and impressive in its environments: the Otherworld sections, which see you running from a supernatural black hole or negotiating environments that would make Dali and Escher blush, are sensational. The story is darkly engaging, taking in child molestation and revenge among many other elements. There are stark moral choices, multiple endings and a whole host of sidequests. *Silent Hill: Downpour* won't appeal to everyone, but it's certainly one of the most interesting games of the year.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

One of PlayStation 3's most atmospheric titles, *Downpour* delivers that current-gen *Silent Hill* we've been waiting for. It'll infuriate as many as it pleases, but Vatra Games has succeeded in crafting a true horror experience.

81%



Previously...
in Play



Issue 208 "With Konami also promising that the clunky combat that the series is notorious for will be scaled back, we're hopeful that this might be a return to form."

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ridge Racer Unbounded

Bound for glory? No. Sorry



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco
Developer
Bugbear
Price
£49.99
Players
1-12
Genre
Racing
Age Rating
7
Website
bugbear.fi
Twitter
@bugbeargames
Facebook
facebook.com/ridgefan



Ridge Racer Unbounded is a stupid title, but fair play to Namco and developer Bugbear: they had to call it something, and *Split/Second* wasn't available.

Despite the fact that *Unbounded* can boast the same name as the hallowed series that helped launch PlayStation, it's actually far closer to both Disney's aforementioned racer and EA's *Burnout* series than the palm trees and precision of *Ridge Racer*'s past.

It's a bold move, and a dangerous one. Just last month we chewed *SSX* out for attempting a similar move and failing spectacularly, and while *Unbounded* is nowhere near as poor as that, it does also fail to capture the spirit of either its heritage or its inspiration.

Unlike *SSX*, this doesn't mean it's a bad game. Even in its compromised, halfway-house state *Unbounded* is still a solid racer. First impressions are very good, with Bugbear's lighting engine being particularly impressive: the first streets we raced on were bathed in golden, magic-hour light, bouncing off the impressively modelled cars and environments. It's a good-looking game, no doubt about it.

It handles as impressively as it looks. Throwing our car into the first corner, that familiar *Ridge Racer* handling kicked in and suddenly all was right in the world. It might be as old as the hills, but it's persisted for a reason: it's awesome.

Less awesome, however, is the destruction and track design, and with such critical mechanics found wanting it's not long before *Unbounded* starts to falter. Like *Split/Second* you can open up shortcuts around the track by filling a power meter, and wipe out other racers with roadside traps. Unlike that game, however, you don't trigger them remotely: you smash into them to open them up. And like in *Burnout* you can wreck (or 'frag') other racers by hitting the power boost and smashing into them.

Has neither the levels of extreme destruction displayed in *Split/Second* or *Burnout*, nor the finesse to carry them off

The problem is that *Unbounded* has neither the levels of extreme destruction displayed in these other games, nor the finesse to carry them off, and suffers because of it. Triggering events remotely meant that *Split/Second*'s Michael Bay-inspired violence had a sophisticated level of mind games to it. Too early and you'd miss the chance, too late and you might get wiped out in your own trap.

There was also strategy to the multi-part power bar: with only a full bar triggering the biggest events, it was a choice between small inconveniences that could bog your opponent

down or potential race – and track – altering megatons that either paid off or left you floundering in last place.

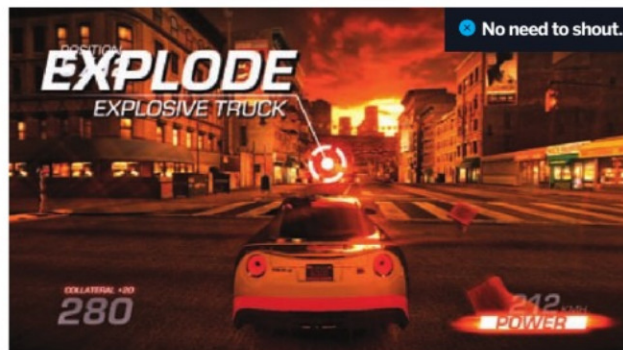
Ridge Racer doesn't have any of these levels to go to. You fill your power meter by dangerous driving, you open a shortcut or set off a trap, you then get more power, and that's it. It's just not sophisticated enough.

Sadly, neither is the *Burnout* influence. Again the basics are there, but not a lot more than that. Unlike EA's series, colliding with anything

other than the very biggest structures or vehicles, even head-on, results in you piling through concrete walls and smacking

cars out of the way. It removes both the thrill of dangerous driving and the opportunity to put that handling to good use: you can just smash through almost everything.

It's a problem compounded by the fact that, with destruction and shortcuts at the forefront, there's not an actual lot of room for the classic powersliding the series made its name on. It's a solid if uninspiring middle ground, pleasing at first but then reduced to repetition after a short while, with most races devolving into tailgating your foes for more boost and then ramming them off the track.

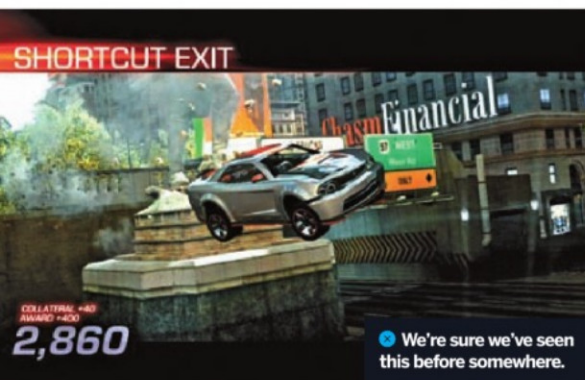




TRACKS OF MY TEARS

Making your own death traps: fun times!

ASIDE FROM THE addition of wanton destruction, the other big new feature *Unbounded* brings to the series is a track editor. It's fairly flexible and easy to use, enabling you to put together your own courses in a very short time. Which is great, obviously, but the underlying problems that affect the racing on the 'actual' tracks still apply here. It is good, however, for creating monstrously unsafe circuits, however, like the guy pictured left found out. Add in explosives and you've got a recipe for a decent amount of fun.



We say most races because Bugbear has tried to introduce some variety. There are drifting events, races that see you attempting to frag as many rival cars within a time limit, boost events and missions that see you commandeering a massive truck and knocking as many police cars off the road as possible.

The problem here is that, despite the supposed variety, these events are just too similar to the core racing and wrecking template. Overfamiliarity kicks in early, no doubt fast-tracked by the fact that the courses consist of interlocking sections of the city, remixed and repeated. These sections aren't big enough or diverse enough, however, and repetition soon becomes the order of the day.

It's a shame. Bugbear made its name with the crazier-than-anything racer *FlatOut*, and to

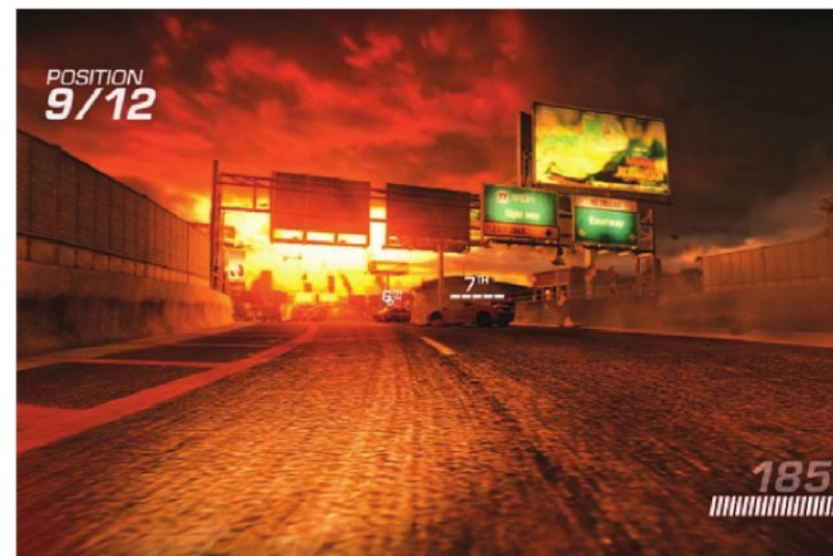
see it neuter that level of mental for the *Ridge Racer* brand doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Again it smacks of a publisher hedging bets. There's fun to be had here, no doubt about that, but it soon tires and in the face of superior, cheaper alternatives it's difficult to recommend. *Unbounded* isn't as terrible as its name, but it's sadly stuck in third gear.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Ridge Racer Unbounded is a fair effort hampered by maddening design decisions. Not pure enough to be a *Ridge Racer* game, not extravagant enough to compete with its rivals, both of which are available for a pittance now.

67%





● *Silent Hill 2* is censored in places, which sucks big time.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Silent Hill HD Collection

'Collection' might be overselling it



PS3

Much like Konami's other recent *Metal Gear Solid HD Collection*, *Silent Hill HD* is a bit of a mixed bag.

On the one hand it includes an HD remaster of *Silent Hill 2*, one of the greatest games ever. On the other it only includes two games, the other being *Silent Hill 3*, which, while good, isn't essential. Not much of a collection.

We get why the original isn't there: because it looks like a bag of ass due to its status as a PSone game. But where is *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories*, which re-imagined said original to widespread critical success? Or *Silent Hill 4: The Room*? It's a bad call by Konami, especially when the *Metal Gear Solid Collection* managed to offer three games for the money.

Technically the collection is lacking, but there's no denying the quality of the games

Disappointment over what's not included aside, what is there is also going to cause some angst for *Silent Hill* vets. Graphically both conversions are clean and crisp, maybe too much so for fans, given the dark and grungy nature of the source material. Textures have



● It's good, but *Silent Hill 3* lacks *Silent Hill 2*'s greatness.

also also been replaced, with *Silent Hill 2*'s streets looking oddly clean and some of *SH3*'s environments looking blander than before. Die-hards be warned, but new players will hardly notice. What they will notice is that the frame rate varies wildly in places, which is hugely disappointing.

Technically then the collection is lacking, but there's no denying the quality of the games underneath. Of the two, *Silent Hill 2* is far and away the most impressive. Rightly lauded as one of the very few 'adult' games – no, not in that way – available on any console, it's a nightmarish journey that touches upon loss, revenge and denial. The rolling fog and rotting, shapeshifting environments of *Silent Hill* as a place may be intimidating, but the true fear comes from within main character James Sunderland. We'll leave it at that.

Silent Hill 3 had quite a job on its hands following such a masterpiece, and doesn't hit anywhere near the same heights. Again, it's a creepy experience that horror fans will definitely get a kick out of, but its conspiratorial story – as opposed to *Silent Hill 2*'s deeply affecting personal tale – and disjointed pace lead to a game that just can't match up.

Series fans will be disappointed, but for newcomers this is a great chance to catch up with one of gaming's true greats. Oh, and *Silent Hill 3*. Those accustomed to modern controls and constant nannying may be put off, but stick with it: you *will* be rewarded. By the games, anyway: the package leaves a lot to be desired. Konami is lucky to have such a classic to fall back on in *Silent Hill 2*, but we'd expect to see *Silent Hill Collection 2* sooner rather than later.

Steve Burns

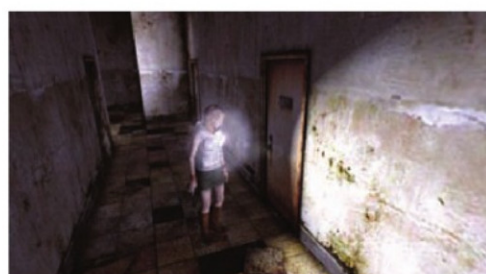
VERDICT

As a package it's sorely lacking in, erm, games, and what's there is lacking in polish. Some mechanics might be showing their age, and *Silent Hill 3* isn't brilliant, but *Silent Hill 2* is still unmissable for anyone with a serious interest in games.

76%



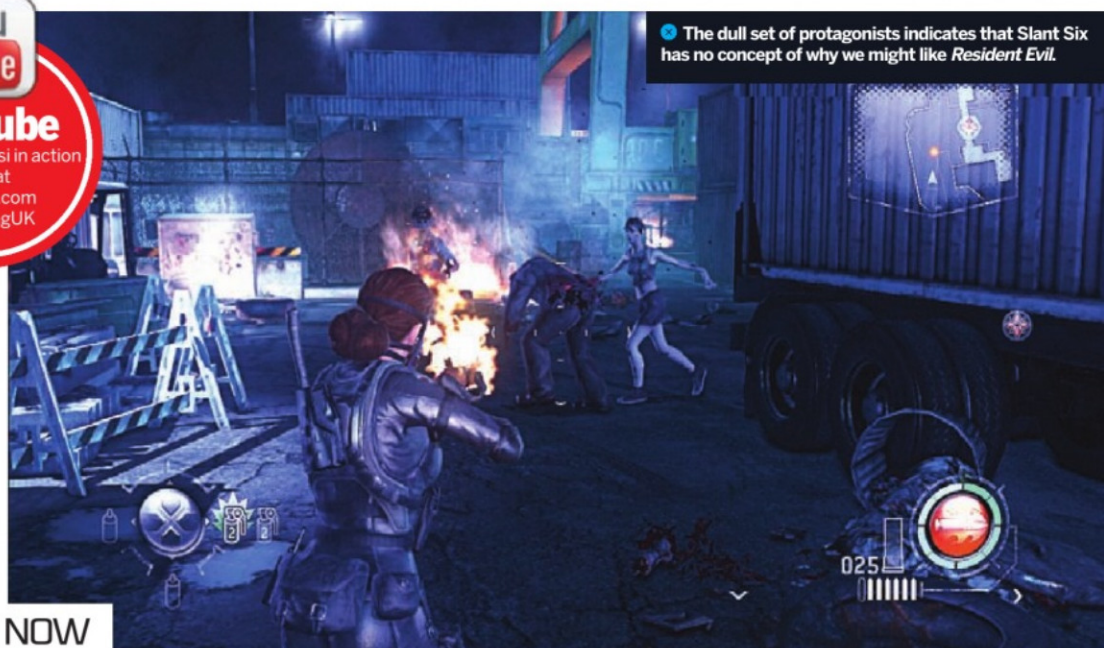
● *Silent Hill 2* side-story Inner Fears is also on the disc, which is nice.



Or you could try



Silent Hill: Downpour Issue 217
Like the look of *Silent Hill HD* but wish it was made this century? Look no further. 81%



The dull set of protagonists indicates that Slant Six has no concept of why we might like *Resident Evil*.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City

When fan fiction gets Capcom's backing

DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
Slant Six Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Shoot-'em-up
Age Rating
15
Website
www.residentevil.com/
reorc
Twitter
@SlantSixGames
Facebook
facebook.com/capcom



This ill-conceived team shooter applies an outdated *SOCOM*-esque formula to a crucial part of the *Resident Evil* storyline, automatically joining the original *Gun Survivor* on a list of the series' biggest misfires. Taking place in a non-canonical version of *Resident Evil 2*'s story, *Operation Raccoon City* sees players inhabiting the 'roles' of six Umbrella agents (read: character classes) with names like Spectre, Vector, Terence and Mop (we might've

made a few up) across a series of scenarios inspired by the game. The ultimate goal is to kill floppy-haired Disc One protagonist, Leon S Kennedy, an endgame which drags you through a bland re-creation of Raccoon City without any of the loveable oddness of its PSone iteration.

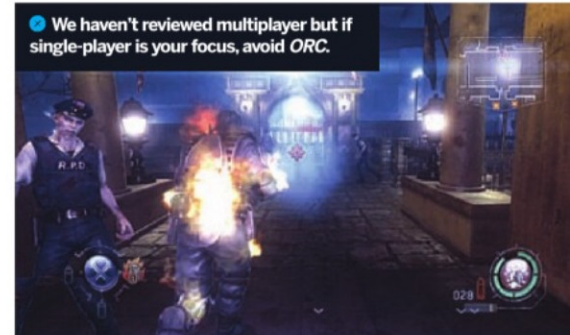
Operation Raccoon City is 50% cover shooter against armed army goons, 50% undead horde slaying – both of which are serviceable, at least in the shooting mechanics. As a single-player experience, however, it is destroyed by the lack of intelligent AI for your four squad-mates, dreadful difficulty spikes and a total deprivation of creative design ideas. Levels are unmemorable affairs, despite the patronising nods to things you might remember from *Resi 2* (ooh, a typewriter!) and other nostalgic gutter trash that trades off the talent of much smarter devs from 14 years ago.

Yet a bland cover shooter would be forgivable – the crippling issue comes in the form of those faceless squad-mates, who are universally stupid in the face of all danger. You thought Sheva in *Resident Evil 5* was bad. Well, imagine having three Shevas who behave like they've just been dropkicked in the head, unable to heal you properly or provide any useful covering fire during combat scenarios. Your team-mates in *ORC* are not team-mates – they're morons, who you must babysit.

This issue is highlighted by random difficulty spikes, when larger enemies like Hunters and Lickers take clip after clip to subdue, which your team is unable to provide. There's also a horribly annoying zombie infection mechanic – in this case, it's actually easier to let your team-mates die and revive them, rather than heal them before zombification.



We haven't reviewed multiplayer but if single-player is your focus, avoid *ORC*.



When you finally reach that climactic, continuity-breaking moment of deciding Leon's fate, there's no drama or intrigue, just a worthless narrative decision followed by a bizarre deathmatch duel in a warehouse. It's a fittingly depressing resolution.

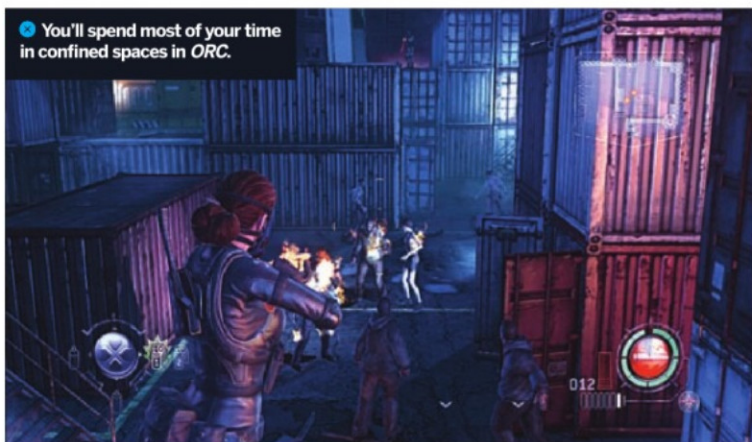
ORC is an insulting franchise stopgap, then. 14 years after *Resi 2*, this homogenised and tedious nonsense illustrates what happens when a dev doesn't understand the property it's working with. As a single-player campaign, this is an almost entirely pointless effort.

Samuel Roberts

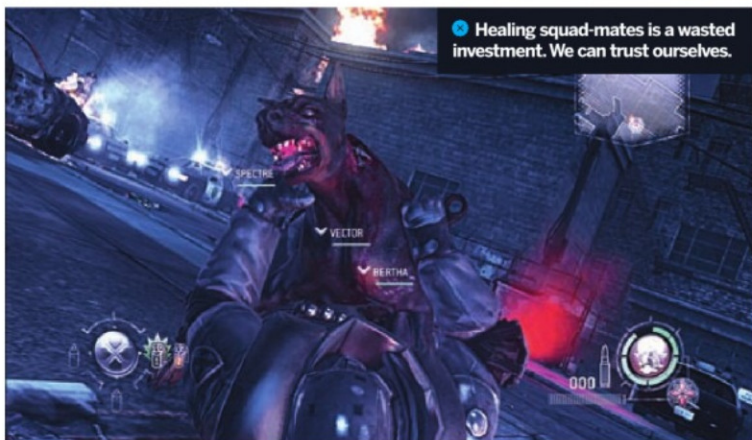
VERDICT

Operation Raccoon City is cynical, franchise-exploiting pump that *Resi* devotees should collectively ignore. As a single-player experience, it is almost entirely pointless. Our highest praise for *ORC*? It made us want to play *Resident Evil 2* again.

33%



You'll spend most of your time in confined spaces in *ORC*.



Healing squad-mates is a wasted investment. We can trust ourselves.



REVIEW

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Devil May Cry HD Collection

Two out of three ain't bad – it's really good

PS3 When you play the three of them in quick succession, there's quite a startling difference between the *Devil May Cry* games – and two thirds of the time this is a good thing. Once again we're presented with an HD collection that... well, it's another good one.

The original game, once a *Resident Evil* title as is vaguely apparent, has received a nice facelift into the world of HD. But that's less important than the game itself, which is – with the benefit of our future-eyes – slightly creaking at the edges. But you know what? It's still a fluid and fun experience, with the sort of addictive mechanics that will keep you coming back and a level of difficulty we had forgotten existed.

Then, of course, *Devil May Cry 3*. Great when it came out, great now. It doesn't benefit as much from the HD lick of paint as the others, but it still

Once again we're presented with an HD collection that... well, it's another good one

looks nice, and it still plays fantastically well – even if it is infuriatingly difficult at times.

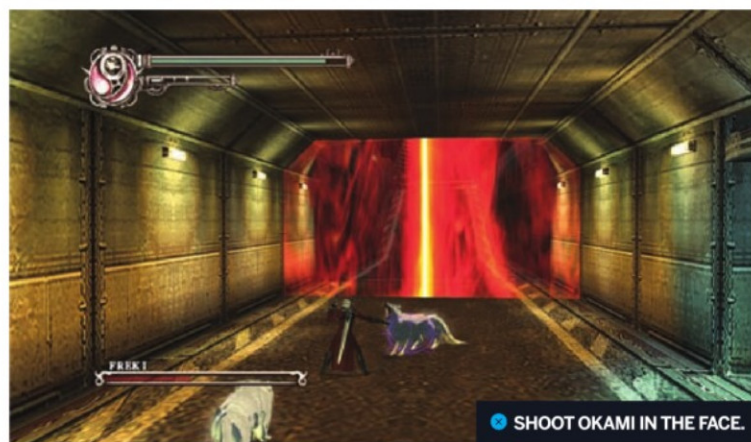
Devil May Cry 2 is the massive zit on the otherwise ruggedly handsome face of this collection. Where the original shows its age, it's still fun to play and reminds us of a time when the ideas it introduced – combat especially – were new. The third entry is also a lot of fun and refines many elements from the two before it into something that still stands proud. But *DMC 2* is just... no.

It's not terrible, it's just lacking in so many respects it beggars belief. Even a decent HD refurbishment can't make it look nice, such is the blandness of the game's general look. A move into more open, expansive environments does nothing but make the experience feel more dawdling and aimless. Combat just *feels* off – it just doesn't have the tightness or responsiveness of the original or number three. And a double jump? Really? Is this *Jak And Daxter HD* in disguise?

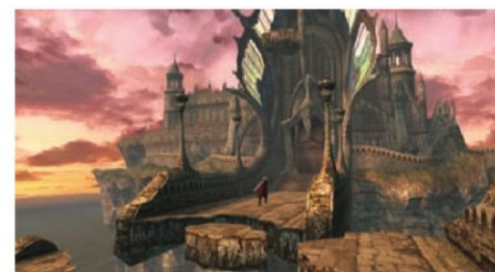
But, of course, you don't have to play it. There are two other perfectly (very) good



Clowns – and by extension jesters – do indeed deserve to die.



SHOOT OKAMI IN THE FACE.



DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
In-house
Price
£29.99
Players
1
Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
16
Website
www.capcom-europe.com
Twitter
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options presented to the player on loading the disc up. Two far better options. Two options that make this yet another HD collection worth buying – it's not just a history lesson; it's a lesson in how to create (two) titles that still stand among the best their genre has to offer (as long as you don't accidentally play the second game).

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Two great games and one that you should probably ignore come together in yet another HD collection we would recommend. The original and third games still offer something you can't get in many other titles, even today. Good stuff.

80%



Remember difficulty? DMC does.

Or you could try



Bayonetta Issue 187
Kamiya's post-DMC DMC-alike is still brilliant. 93%

XBOX 360

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RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Street Fighter X Tekken

Street Fighter times Tekken = ???



Publisher Capcom **Developer** Capcom **Price** £49.99 **Players** 1-7 **Genre** Fighting **Age Rating** 12+ **Website** www.streetfighter.com/sfxtk **Twitter** @CapcomEuro **Facebook** facebook.com/capcomcommunity

This could very easily have gone a bit wrong – the rather silly

marketing campaigns fronted by the creators of each respective series could well have been indicative of a game that was a bit throwaway, if anything. It's not. It's fine. It's good, actually – *Street Fighter X Tekken*, while a novelty and not the greatest of the fighting games, is a solid brawler and throws some interesting unique points into the mix.

The points that matter: the *Tekken* fighters fit into the *Street Fighter* mould surprisingly well, though no Jack is still a travesty; the gem system is nowhere near as ruinous to the experience as we expected it to be, offering a mix of buffs and debuffs that make smaller changes rather than turning the game into a case of 'get this gem to win'; the story is one of the most pointless things ever committed to a game; the cross combos, self-sacrificing Pandora mode and auto-combos are interesting, if not

all totally useful additions. Generally speaking, *Street Fighter X Tekken* is well made and little feels superfluous.

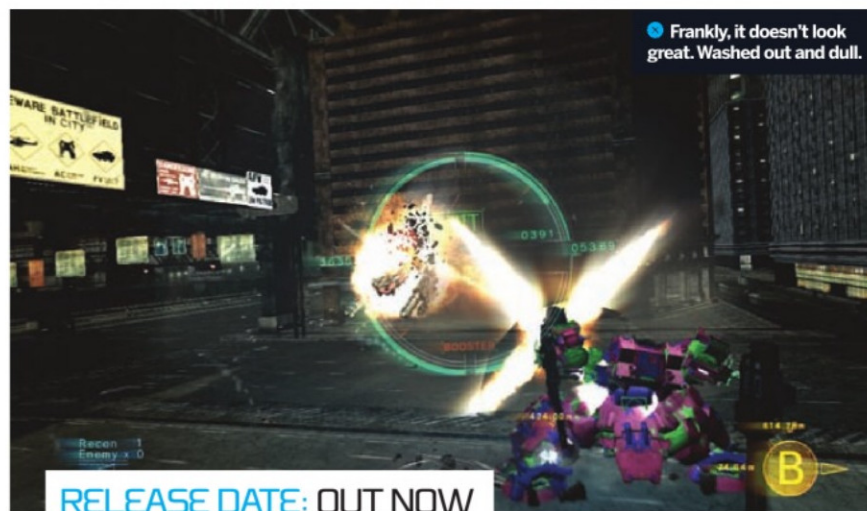
It's not as pure, or straightforward a game as vanilla *Street Fighter* or entry-level *Tekken* and as such can't shake that whole novelty aspect. But in its own right, *Street Fighter X Tekken* is a deep, rewarding and satisfying brawler that will certainly carve itself a devoted fan base. Shame about the traditional Capcom DLC, though.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Offering a simple and welcoming enough structure to lure in newcomers, *SFXT* also has enough going on to keep enthusiasts happy. The gem system doesn't quite fit and it won't convince everyone, but there's no question this is a very good brawler.

83%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Armored Core V



STOMP STOMP STOMP
STOMP BANG

Publisher Namco Bandai **Developer** From Software **Price** £40.84 **Players** 1-10 **Genre** Third-person shooter **Age Rating** 12 **Website** www.armoredcore-v.com **Twitter** @NamcoBandaiUK **Facebook** facebook.com/NamcoBandai

If you want a confusing experience – a game that looks below par, plays in a clunky fashion, has an awful story yet manages to be quite captivating – you've come to the right place. Yes, folks, it's time to strap yourself into a giant stompy robot once again and stomp around, stomping on things (as a giant robot).

Armored Core V, aside from having a stupid spelling, takes the series back to how things were in the before times, in the long long ago. Eschewing the more pure-action focus of the last few entries and spin-offs to the series, the game brings back a more strategic emphasis we haven't really seen since the series began back in 1997.

This is, on one hand, a good thing. *AC* has always been a game that suited mindful action over mindless blasting and the need to customise, update and create specialised cores for individual missions will get its hooks into certain kinds of people. You know who you are.

On the other hand, it just doesn't quite work. Aside from a menu system that appears to have been designed as some sort of cruel joke, *Armored Core V*



is home to an unsatisfying, lightweight combat system. It rarely feels like you're in total control, especially in larger battles, and there are plenty of difficulty spikes appearing as a result of the game being a bugger rather than the player being bad.

Ian Dransfield

The game brings back a more strategic emphasis we haven't really seen since 1997

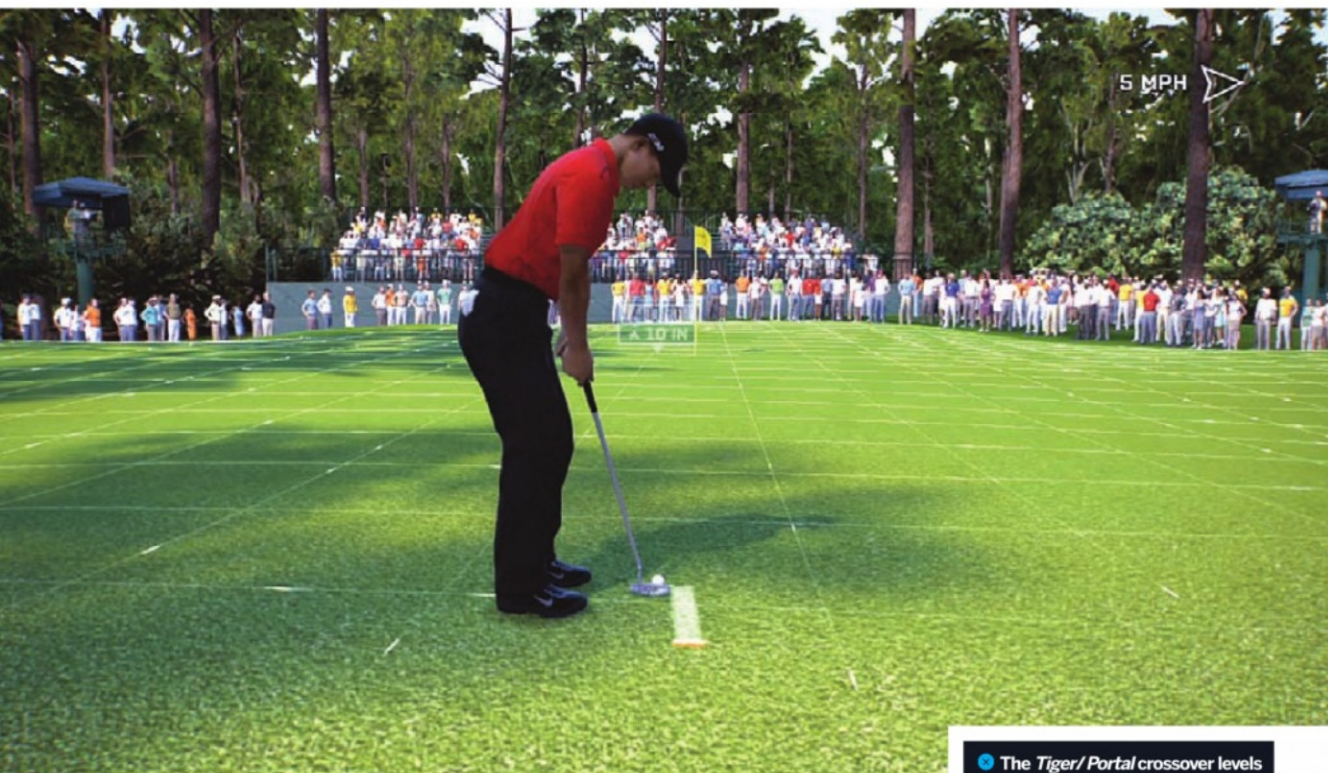
VERDICT

Yes, this is from the same developer that made *Dark Souls*. Yes, it isn't terrible. No, the Common Man likely won't care for it. Yes, we are annoyed it isn't better than it is.

60%



Difficulty spikes are an irritant.



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13



The Tiger/Portal crossover levels are some of the most exciting.



DETAILS

Publisher
EA Sports
Developer
EA Tiburon
Price
£49.99
Players
1-7
Genre
Sports
Age Rating
3
Website
ea.com/tiger-woods
Twitter
@EA
Facebook
facebook.com/EA

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13

Pastime Paradise

PS3 Golf is a pretty mundane sport, and you'd imagine an officially licensed game of it to be the same. Go out onto the green, knock a few balls around, laugh at poor people in the clubhouse. Yeah. We got it. Then you play *Tiger 13* and you find out you can play with a two-year-old Tiger Woods in a garden. Er, yeah.

That's not a joke. This year's game has a legacy mode that tasks players with completing various golfing milestones from Tiger's life. Which, as he was a child prodigy, means that you'll be controlling him as he knocks golf balls around the garden as a fetus, appears on television when only slightly older, and then it's on to junior tournaments and his pro career highlights.

After you're over the inference that when Tiger was a kid the world was permanently bathed in purple nostalgia light, the mode is an enjoyable way to experience a bit of history. It might feature the awful decision to make you restart all the challenges in a certain vignette than just the one you fail, but it's decent

enough and a return to prominence for Tiger, who took a back seat from last year's game in favour of Masters branding (and DEFINITELY NOTHING ELSE).

Thrilling in places, but as mechanical and exciting as doing the washing up for most of it

With Tiger back on the prowl (NOT LIKE THAT) it's good to know, after destroying last year's game through sheer brain-breaking idiocy of featuring an ever-present caddy who would essentially line up your shots for you, order has been restored in *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13*. The caddy's still there if you need or want his advice, but by and large he's a passive figure. Good.

There's also a new, rather useful display that shows you where your swing is going wrong or right (as well as changes to the way the fundamentals work), online clubhouses to join and compete in, and the same old workmanlike

gameplay underneath. Essentially, it's *Tiger*. Plain old *Tiger*: thrilling in places, but it just feels a little stale. It's hard to shake the feeling that EA perfected this template years ago, and as engaging as it can be there's not really a lot of places for the developer to go, hence the creeping feeling of over-familiarity. It's a solid representation of the sport, and

if you absolutely need to play the Masters in a game, then get this. Everyone else should just get *Everybody's Golf* or an older version.

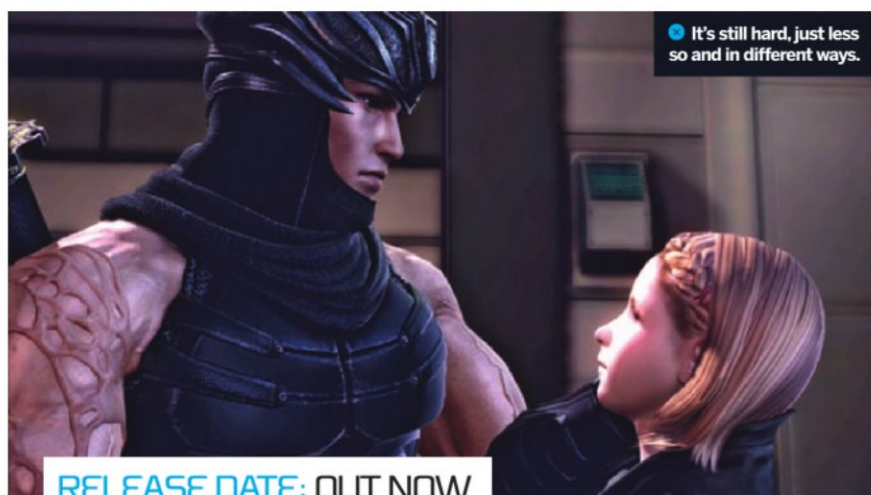
Steve Burns

VERDICT

Far better than last year's game and with all the new bells and whistles you'd expect from a yearly EA Sports title. There's still no getting away from the fact that this is still golf, same as it ever was, only much more expensive than picking up *Tiger 11* for a handful of change.

70%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ninja Gaiden 3



Should be: deft, nimble. Is: clumsy, inept



Publisher Tecmo Koei Developer Team Ninja Price £49.99
Players 1 Genre Action adventure Age Rating 18 Website www.teamninja-studio.com/ng3/us/ Twitter @TeamNINJASstudio
Facebook facebook.com/teamninja3studio

It's strange to go back and play (an admittedly revamped) version of the first of the modern *Ninja Gaiden* games on Vita and swiftly follow it up by jumping into this newest entry in the series. Strange because the game first released in 2004 should have influenced the 2012 iteration far more than it has. You're not an abject failure, *Ninja Gaiden 3*, but you are far poorer than you should be. Bad *Ninja Gaiden 3*. On your bed.

Fundamentally things should be exactly the same as before, tweaked a little and made to look better. The latter part is true, but the basic mechanics of the game have been changed – dare we say it, simplified. What this results in is the feeling you're never quite in control of Ryu and his ridiculous adventures across the world. It's too focused on spectacle, not rewarding the player for doing well but instead rewarding them

for simply jabbing a couple of buttons every now and then. On the most basic of levels it works and can be satisfying, but that doesn't mean it's much good.

Throw in liberal use of poorly implemented QTEs and you have a ninja game we wish would just slink off back to the shadows. Maybe the inevitable *Sigma* incarnation will rectify the problems, but for now it's one to avoid unless you see it for a tenner.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

A huge misstep for a series that has provided a lot of good times over the years. It's oversimplified, boring and leaves the player feeling they're never quite in full control – a Very Bad Thing in the world of *Ninja Gaiden*.

63%



You save the game with a falcon. It's like a Japanese Kes.



The AI at work: the guy by the open goal? He's attacking. And he's been there for about a minute unharassed.



The Thriller dance craze had only just hit the streets.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

FIFA Street

Taking back the Street (for a refund)



Publisher EA Developer EA Canada Price £49.99
Players 1-7 Genre Sports Age Rating 3 Website www.ea.com/uk/football/fifa-street Twitter @EA
Facebook facebook.com/EA

The habitually disappointing *FIFA Street* series is infuriating because deep down you think it should just work. How hard can it be to combine insane tricks with showboating goals to create an arcadey alternative to the main *FIFA* series?

Extremely difficult, if this long-running series is anything to go by. This, the fourth iteration, makes great strides in presentation but sadly suffers from the same flaws as its forebears: namely the feeling that the game is almost completely predetermined, playing by – and subsequently then breaking – its own rules when it suits.

EA just can't get one-on-one trick interaction to feel natural and skill-based, and so beating a man comes down to a rock-paper-scissors scenario, where unfortunately the AI is operating both inputs. You trick, it decides, not by virtue of ability but by which outcome suits the game. Tricking past opposing players, an intrinsic part of the experience, feels woolly and unsuited to the engine, which simply isn't sophisticated enough to handle the complex coming together of two

skeletons (as numerous, and hilarious physics bugs will attest).

The result is seemingly canned outcomes, made all the worse by the pathetic AI which bends results (our defender, controlled by the CPU, once smashed a loose ball into his own net under no pressure) in a bid to create 'exciting' encounters.

It's not long before *FIFA Street* outstays its welcome

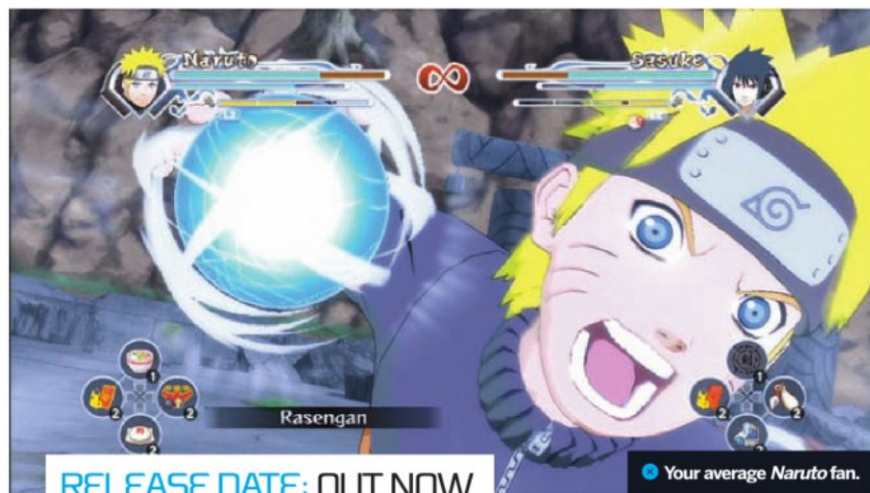
The opposite is true of course, and it's not long before *FIFA Street* outstays its welcome. The different modes and gametypes are interesting, the career mode pleasing in its progression, but the game itself is simply too flawed.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

As DLC for *FIFA 12* this would be slightly more palatable, but as a full scale release it's not up to scratch. There are moments of joy here, but they're few and far between, buried in frustration and bewilderment.

47%



Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations

Another Naruto Game



Publisher Namco Bandai **Developer** Cyber Connect 2 **Price** £45.95 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Fighting **Age Rating** 12 **Website** <http://bit.ly/Agknfd> **Twitter** @namcobandai **Facebook** facebook.com/NamcoBandai

It's easy to write off *Naruto* games. This is because they all look the same and are frankly mental. All that epilepsy on screen makes it look as if they require no skill. The story is gibberish and very, very Japanese. It's specifically built to appeal to about six people, all of them monsters. It's Another *Naruto* Game.

Take some time with it, however, and you discover, hey, this isn't as bad as it first looks, which is to say it looks atrocious but it's not. The combat's hardly *Virtua Fighter*, but there's a certain rhythm and flow to the bouts that's not first apparent. It's about timing, not memorising a phone book's worth of move strings and combos. You start to think – as your eyes melt from Death Star-explosion levels of light that are being rammed into your eyes – about strategy. What's coming next. Not a lot of thought mind, but it's there.

And then, despite the fact that it's Another *Naruto* Game – and you

should probably hate yourself for even contemplating this – you start to enjoy it. Not loads. Not like you'd enjoy, say, *SFIV*, or other games that aren't *Naruto*. But there's some enjoyment here.

And if you are a fan of *Naruto*? Then there's various story modes to muck around in, shops to buy trinkets from, collections to look through. It's never going to be enough to convince Johnny Battlefield to look twice at it as he passes through Game Shop X, but given a chance it might surprise. It did us.

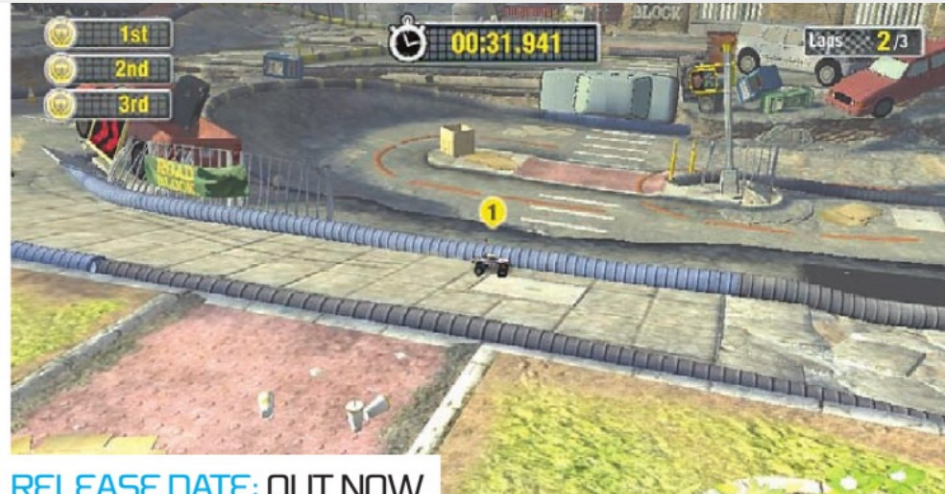
Steve Burns



VERDICT

Another *Naruto* Game, but it's not worthless and there's actually some fun to be gleaned from it. Obviously this is more suited to fans, but brilliant art direction and deceptive gameplay might convince those who try it that's it's not bobbins.

53%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

MotorStorm RC

Take your Skidmarks in your pocket

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer** Evolution Studios **Price** £4.79 **Players** 1-4 **Genre** Racing **Age Rating** 3 **Website** www.motorstorm.com **Twitter** @MotorStormRC **Facebook** facebook.com/MotorStormRC

VITA Imagine a world where Evolution Studios decided to follow up the rather disappointing *MotorStorm Apocalypse* with a stripped-down remote control car racer, cross compatible between PS3 and Vita, taking influences from the likes of *Micro Machines*, *Super Off Road* and *Skidmarks* – WAIT A SECOND, THAT'S THIS WORLD.

For an insultingly low price players get a game that's fantastically well-suited to portable gaming, offering tiny races never lasting more than a couple of minutes a pop with a range of stipulations. It could be a straight-up race, a time trial against floating arrows, 'pursuit' requiring overtaking a certain number of opponents or drift, which asks you to... drift.

Multiple tracks and vehicles are also thrown the player's way, with each mixing things up in its own way. Then there's both the cross-format play twixt home and portable consoles – a good

thing – and multiplayer, which doesn't allow direct competition but instead downloads ghost-floating-arrow times to beat. Which is less good, though admittedly not bad.

It won't last you forever unless you're the sort of person who gets ridiculously obsessed with bettering your times and beating those idiots online who are somehow *always* faster than you. But you will have a lot of fun while it lasts. It might not feel strictly like a *MotorStorm* game, but it's clearly a labour of love for the developer. We approve.

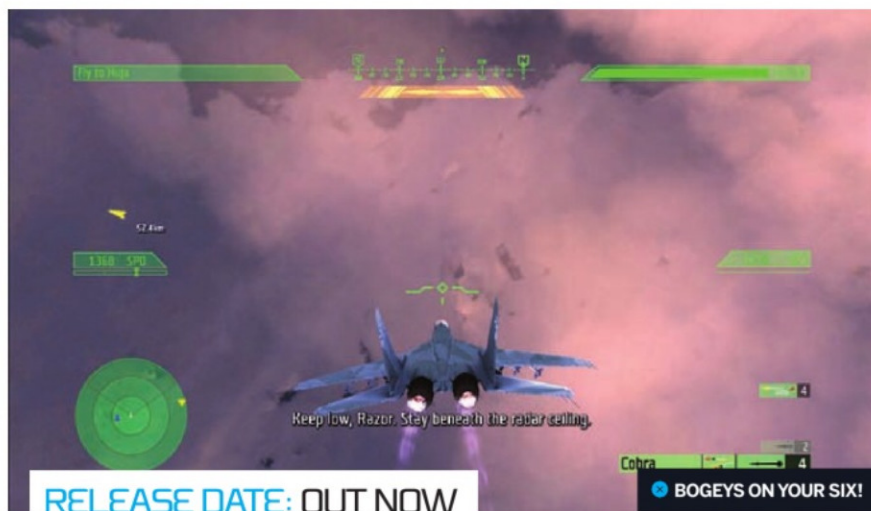
Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

An old-fashioned racer with some new-fashioned ideas slapped on top of it, *MotorStorm RC* is good fun. For under a fiver you get the game on both PS Vita and PS3, too, which is reason enough to buy it.

81%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

BOGEYS ON YOUR SIX!

JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters



JASF: Jane's Awful and Stupid Flying-game



Publisher Evolved Games Developer Trickstar Games
Price £39.99 Players 1-16 Genre Flight sim Age Rating 7
Website www.jasfgame.com Twitter @CapcomEuro Facebook
www.facebook.com/jasfgame

The single best thing about this easily dismissible tripe is the back of the box, where it states: 'CUNNING ENEMIES FROM THE NORTH! This makes us picture an army of flat cap-toting, gruff Yorkshiremen carrying out flanking positions before pelting you with mushy peas and gravy – whippets on standby lest the fight get out of hand.

You'll forgive us that deviation into folly there – we're still trying to figure out how to be nice to JASF in any way. We can go back ten-plus years to when it was a respected series of flight simulators on the PC. That's about all we can say that's nice, and it's not even about this modern game.

For all your '30 licensed aircraft!', your '65,000km of terrain!' and 'some graphics!' you've got inanity of unprecedented levels, unclear objectives that arbitrarily fail the player for no discernible reason, a level of difficulty that veers between insulting(ly easy) and insulting(ly) hard and the sort of 'some graphics!' that genuinely wouldn't look out of place on a PS2 game. The most recent *Ace Combat* might have become boring by overwhelming players with its relentless over the top, but at least

Whippets on standby lest the fight get out of hand

it remembered to be *fun* at times. *Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters*? Nah. Just like the PC sims of yesteryear we're going to be very deliberate and accurate here, not wasting our words or dealing in vagaries: it's a bag of pump.

Ian Dransfield



VERDICT

How is it hard to get war machines travelling at hundreds of miles an hour and blowing stuff up? Because, according to JASF, it is. Neither sim nor out and out arcade shooter, what it is is a bad game.

30%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Army Corps Of Hell

Devil music



Publisher Square Enix Developer Entersphere Co. Ltd
Price £29.99 Players 1-4 Genre Real-time strategy Age Rating 12
Website www.armycorpsofHell.com Twitter @RealKingOfHell
Facebook facebook.com/SquareEnix

More games need metal.

Alright, lots of games have metal, but *Army Corps Of Hell* makes us feel more games need metal, with its silly little chugging guitars and barking vocals accompanying most things you do.

But what do you do? Well, controlling the King Of Hell you have to float around various connected mini-battlefields with your ever-growing army of minions. These minions take up different styles – soldiers, spearmen, magic-users – and have different abilities. You order them around with a few different button presses and holds – not in direct control of them, more just aiming them – and take on other demons and monsters from the underworld. It is, rather surprisingly, a real-time strategy game, sort of like if the exploration and RPGish bits of *Overlord* were stripped out entirely and all you were left with was the minions and some enemies.

There's an element of strategy to every encounter, with obstacles other than merely what enemy you're facing needing to be taken into consideration.



But generally speaking it's little more than aiming the right sort of attack at an opponent and holding the right trigger to win, sometimes with a QTE thrown in.

Army Corps Of Hell is quite refreshing, but gets boring quickly, never really progressing that far beyond its initial ideas. Then again, it does have some satisfying metal in it.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

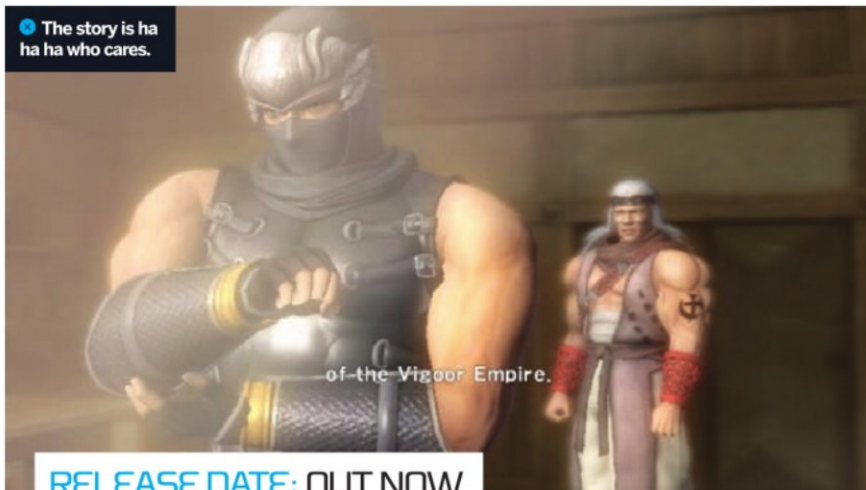
Lacking in some areas and ultimately a bit bland, there's still a bit of value in *Army Corps Of Hell's* unique premise. It won't keep you playing for long though, and we understand metal isn't for everyone.

64% METAL





Controls do sometimes feel fiddly, but you get used to it.



The story is ha ha ha who cares.

of the Vigor Empire.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus

Fourth time lucky



VITA

Publisher Tecmo Developer Team Ninja Price £34.99 Players 1 Genre Action adventure Age Rating 18 Website teamninja-studio.com/ngsv/us/ Twitter @TecmoGames Facebook facebook.com/teamninja studio

This is, what – the 50th time this game has been remade? Alright,

the fourth. Original, to *Black*, to *Sigma*, to what we have here. And it shows, because *Sigma Plus* is resolutely an eight-year-old game – which ends up being something of a double-edged blade. Like a katana. Which Ryu Hayabusa, lead character in *Ninja Gaiden*, uses. Coincidence? Yes. Plus a katana is a single-edged blade, thus ruining our point.

Anyway, why is it fake-katana double-edged? Because *Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus*

is still a good game. It was somewhat ahead of its time even back in 2004 on release, and it's aged well in many regards thanks to the inventiveness of its design and challenge. Oh! the challenge. It is a hard game, though sometimes straying into the realms of unfair, but usually just hard. Block. Do remember to block. Block and you'll be less likely to hurl your Vita off a bridge.

However, it hasn't aged well in other regards. It doesn't look so nice any more, but who cares about that? Design-wise, though, it has been surpassed by so many other third-person action games – so many games it itself inspired. It is a relic of a very brief period of gaming history: worth a bash, not worth paying full whack for. And the Vita-specific controls are a bunch of arse.

Ian Dransfield

It was somewhat ahead of its time even back in 2004 on release, and it's aged well in many regards

VERDICT

Fun and a solid challenge, but lacking in some respects, showing its age, sometimes unfair and with pointless Vita-specific controls. *Sigma Plus* wouldn't be a wholly unwelcome addition to your library; you've just seen it three times already before.

72%

PSN reviews



RAYMAN 3 HD

So long and thanks for all the memories

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Price £8.99 Players 1 Genre Platformer

PSN

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT *Rayman 3 HD* that feels old. It's not the characters with massive grins nor is it the relentless collecting of Floating Things either because *Rayman Origins* has those same elements and that feels like a modern, fresh game. No, this feels every bit the 3D-platformer-made-in-2003 it is because the collecting feels redundant, the camera spins out of control when you're indoors and the levels feel cramped. Having said that, even with its archaic roots poking through the HD textures, there's a light, playful tone running through *Rayman 3 HD* and while it can be hard to enjoy, it's almost impossible to dislike. Those wanting a burst of nostalgia will love this but it's a bit too old to grab most modern gamers.

77%



WORMS: ULTIMATE MAYHEM

Figuring out that extra dimension

Publisher Team17 Developer Team17 Price £8.99 Players 1-2 Genre Puzzle

DLC

IF YOU LOVE *Worms*, you'll likely have played one of the 3D attempts at *Worms* and by played, we mean fought the camera, lost sight of your worms, mouthed the penultimate letter of the alphabet at the AI's stupidity, bounced a grenade off the nearest pillar and killed two of your team-mates by accident. *Worms: Ultimate Mayhem* is a re-release of one of those tragic 3D attempts, fixing the camera while solving the AI problem by default thanks to online play. This allows the strategy, the mayhem, the fun and the chaos to shine and *Worms: Ultimate Mayhem* is a fabulous multiplayer title. Just don't play it by yourself. These worms are dumb.

80%



I AM ALIVE

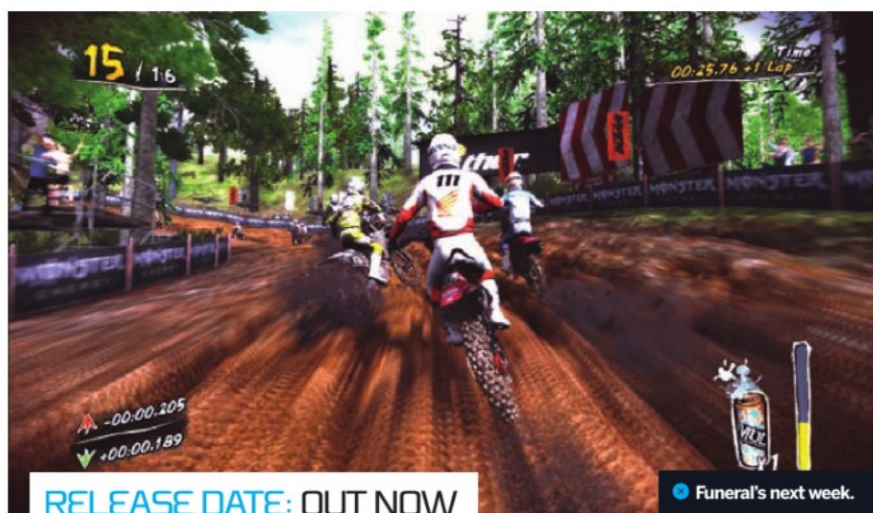
So much potential, so much wasted

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Shanghai Price £7.99 Players 1 Genre Action

PSN

FOR THE FIRST hour, *I Am Alive* is the greatest game you've ever played. Climbing around a ruined city and clinging on for dear life, bumping into enemies who approach with caution, assessing the threat of paranoid survivors, it feels exciting, new and thrilling. Unfortunately the inevitable need to scale up the challenge to keep things interesting exposes the underlying problems, your stamina barely outliving attempts to wrestle with the clumsy controls and combat becoming a context-sensitive mess that's needlessly (and fatally) frustrating. Even so, it's still the best game to reference a Pearl Jam chorus in its title that we know of.

64%



Mud: FIM Motocross World Championship



Mud, glorious Mud?
Ummm, no

PS3 Publisher Black Bean Developer Milestone Price £49.99
Players 1-12 Genre Racing Age Rating 16 Website www.mudthegame.com/
Twitter N/A Facebook [facebook.com/MUDtheGame](https://www.facebook.com/MUDtheGame)

According to *Mud's* handling model, real-life motocross riders are doing physics wrong. Waiting until your wheels touch the ground before attempting to turn your bike? The fools. Just turn it in the air! Granted it looks stupid and unwieldy, but hey, it'll help you win. Silly boys.

Just kidding, yeah? You can't really turn a floating bicycle in midair in reality, but you can in *Mud*. This concession to arcade sensibilities is to tie in with the game's xtreme and awesome nature, one that sees you playing as stereotypical xtreme characters who neck energy drinks to go faster. You can buy updates for your riders to make them even more xtreme, and progress through a world tour in xtreme locations vying for the rights to be the most xtreme xtremety in the known xtremeverse.

Strange then that the rest of *Mud* is so boring: you race on a bumpy track at what seems like ten miles an hour, then you occasionally do a jump and 'drive' through the air using the aforementioned

physics. Course design is as exciting as watching a rerun of last year's indoor bowls championships, and after a while they all blend into one long brown track. Which isn't great mental imagery, but it's no more fun driving it, let us tell you.

In fairness, it's not terrible: it's not even really bad. Just utterly, utterly disposable, with forgettable racing action that requires very little skill and presentation that the phrase 'third-rate' would be too good for. Just buy *Joe Danger* from PlayStation Store instead.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Far more likely to make you fall asleep than feel any excitement, *Mud* is a strange halfway house of styles that was never going to succeed. We'd rather play the developer's superbike games, and that's saying something.

50%



Warriors Orochi 3

More Dynasty Warriors? Go on then



PS3 Publisher Tecmo Koei Developer Koei, Omega Force
Price £49.99 Players 1-2 Genre Hack-'n'-slash Age Rating 12
Website warriorsorochi.co.uk/3/ Twitter @tecmokoeiurope
Facebook [facebook.com/koeigames](https://www.facebook.com/koeigames)

Had enough *Dynasty*/
Samurai Warriors yet?
Yes? Irrelevant. If you

only take one thing away from this entire issue of *Play*, then make it this: *Dynasty Warriors* will outlast us all. When the bomb drops and only the cockroaches are left, it'll be *Dynasty Warriors* that they play.

And why not? *Warriors Orochi 3* isn't a bad game, after all. It might be as repetitive as watching Sky Sports News on loop for three full days, but it's still enjoyable. There's simply too much satisfaction to be had from killing people with a great big stick.

If you've played an *Orochi* title before – or indeed a *Dynasty Warriors* title, and the odds are you have – then you know what to expect. Choose a feudal hero, charge into battle against insurmountable odds, win by hammering @. You can press other buttons (and *Orochi* does have a nice three-way tag system for you to use/abuse) but on the face of it you'll hit @ a lot. A LOT.



After about two or three hours of this you'll probably be tired of it all and want some peace, but this is *Orochi's* secret: you will be tempted to come back. Not hugely, but the basic appeal of hitting people is too strong for players, bored on a dreary Sunday, to not think: I'd love to pick up a pointy stick and kill 70,000 people today.

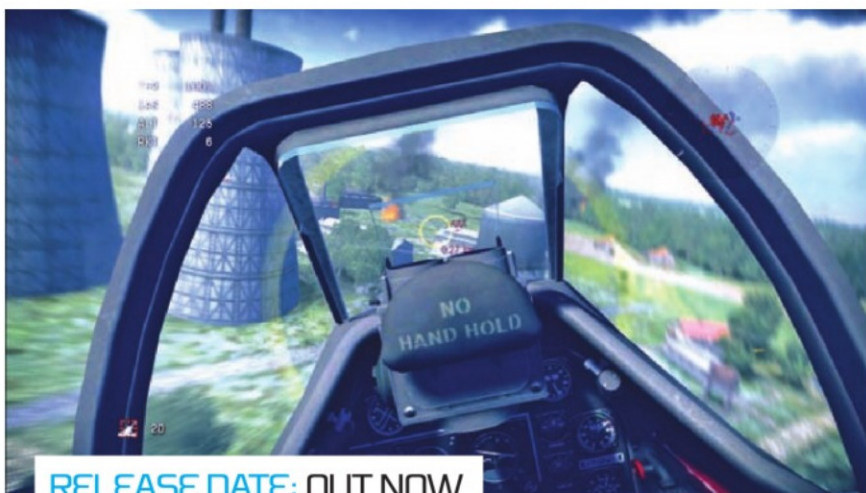
Steve Burns

VERDICT

Warriors Orochi 3 isn't going to convince non-believers, and new features such as the ability to make your own battlefields don't add much to proceedings. Still, it's a passable way to spend an afternoon.

59%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Birds Of Steel

Not a flying ace, but hardly a joker either



Publisher Konami Developer Gaijin Entertainment
Price £39.99 Players 1-2 Genre Action Age Rating PG
Website gaijinent.com/en/ Twitter @Konami Facebook facebook.com/Konami

Despite the fact that it's the sort of title you'd expect to see on a PC gamer's shelf circa 1995, *Birds Of Steel* isn't a super-hardcore flight sim. It can be punishingly difficult if you want it to be, but on its default setting it's an enjoyable, sometimes-thrilling WWII flight game that maybe three people will buy. Oh well.

Which is a shame, because for those wanting a break from their normal diet of gunishment and street fighting, *Birds Of Steel* isn't a bad alternative. Rammed with historical sorties, authentic planes and history buff-pleasing mission intros there's a lot here to like.

From tense bombing raids to twitch-based dogfighting, what appears at first glance (thanks to the subject matter and the so-so graphics) to be your average boreathon morphs into a fairly exciting battle for air supremacy. Your crafts are brittle to say the least, rendering every one-on-one potentially your last, and dropping torpedoes on enemy carriers at top speed (which is impressively rendered) is a test of skill and nerve.

It's impressive stuff, but there's not quite enough here to keep all but the most committed of aces going. For all those moments of *Top Gun*-shaming exhilaration there are niggles (mainly poor production values) ready to suck you back out. And, really, once you've downed 15 German planes, you've downed them all. That said, this is far better than it looks.

Steve Burns



VERDICT

It's a WWII flight sim: you probably already know if you're interested. If you're on the fence or looking for something different there are far worse buys out there, but it's not for everyone and will tire quickly.

55%



PSN reviews



MASS EFFECT 3: FROM ASHES

Dull mission, great squad member

Publisher EA Developer BioWare Price £9.99 Players 1 Genre Action RPG



WHILE THE INTERNET hate machine is churning through the endless conspiracy theories and how BioWare screwed us by having this as day one DLC when it's on the disc, the rage has disguised the fact that the DLC is actually pretty good. If you want more of the back story, it's borderline essential, which just adds fuel to the Internet Hate Machine but let's not digress. *From Ashes* grants you a fairly ho-hum mission and an extra squad member who – avert your eyes for spoilers – is Javik, a Prothean. His powers aren't particularly remarkable but his dialogue is, particularly when you drag both him and Liara along to Thessia. Great for *Mass Effect* fans wanting more back story then, a little unremarkable for everyone else.

78%



A-MEN

If you have a problem, if no one else can help...

Publisher Bloober Developer Bloober Team Price £9.99 Players 1 Genre Puzzler



LEMMINGS WITH GUNS. That's how we'd describe *A-Men*. Reverse *Lemmings* with guns. That's how we'd describe *A-Men* if a slightly more elaborate description was needed. You're trying to kill the walking-back-and-forth-endlessly soldiers to reach the exit rather than trying to save them, otherwise it's the same formula. 2D side-on puzzling, plenty of traps in the environment plus your own weapons to choose and use. The big knock against *A-Men* is it gets too hard, too fast with an annoying fussiness with regards to the context-sensitive controls. Otherwise, it's packed with content, fairly cheap and, hey, it's *Lemmings*! With guns!

70%



SHOOT MANY ROBOTS

Needs many players

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Demiurge Price £7.99 Players 1-4 Genre Shoot-'em-up



AWFUL IN SINGLE-player, brilliant in multiplayer. That's *Shoot Many Robots* in a nutshell, a four-player co-op shooter in the vein of *Contra* with the emphasis on customisation and levelling up. Examples of stuff you can buy and use: George Washington wigs, ice lasers, viking helmets, disco pants, jetpacks and gnome rocket launchers. It's a silly, stupid game that sees you shooting many robots (of course) and has a stern difficulty to keep things interesting. It completely dies on its arse in single-player, though, because it loses the camaraderie, the balance and the look-at-what-he's-wearing appeal, but for multiplayer, this is damn good fun.

81%



BOOST YOUR TROPHY LEVEL BY UNLOCKING: 4 GOLD 11 SILVER 21 BRONZE

Trophy fans rejoice! Not only does PS Vita offer PlayStation gaming on the go but it also brings with it a host of new Trophies. Follow our simple guide to get your proud collection started...

FIFA FOOTBALL

Once in a Lifetime – Easy

This is surprisingly easy. Play as a goalkeeper in an arena practice match against just another goalie, be sure to get your keeper the ball then simply slot it in. Easy.

Woodwork and In! – Easy

You'll likely get this without trying, but if you're struggling to unlock it then try practising penalty kicks while aiming at either of the top corners of the goal.

● Hit the post for a Trophy!
Not like real football then.



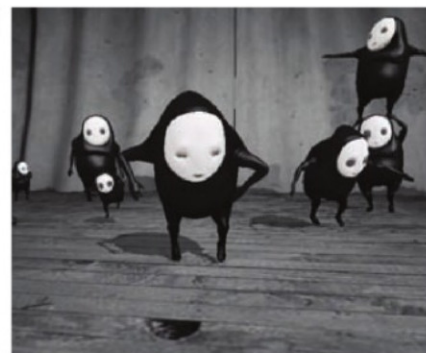
UNCHARTED: GOLDEN ABYSS

Relic Finder – Medium

In Chapter 15 you will open a locked wooden door for Chase. After you have done this you can scale the wall beside the door which you can climb up and around – the relic will be at the top.

Ruffle My Feathers – Easy

During Chapter 20 you'll encounter a cut-scene with Sully. There's a parrot in it who can be tapped to get him to say a quip of some form. Tap the parrot as much as possible to get eight unique quips and unlock this Trophy.



ESCAPE PLAN

Death Comes For Ye – Medium

Most levels it's easy to figure out how Lil and Laarg should die, but in the game's early levels you will need to be inventive – make sure you interact with the environment in every way possible.

Test Subjects – Hard

For this you'll need to kill sheep on at least six levels – there are 12 levels where this is possible, so just make sure you kill sheep however you can wherever you spot one.

Trippin – Medium

There are a few levels where objects clutter the ground so, before you move them for Lil to pass by, let him first trip over them. Do this on five different levels and this Trophy will be yours.

Vita Trophies Guide



UNIT 13

Twin Foiled – Easy

This can be earned on the very first mission. In the room where you must plant the charges, wait for a patrolling enemy to walk near a stationary guard then, when he turns around, get behind them and stab them both.



Two For One – Hard

On the High Value Target mission PHOENIX head through the level until you have to disable a trip mine. On the left are two guards – carefully line up a shot that will take out both and then fire. Preferably use a sniper or assault rifle.



Life of the Party – Medium

In mission 10 you need to find and collect a wooden bust in the back of the storage room. Now wait until you reach the checkpoint timer, but instead of going upstairs take a right to a dead end. Place the bust and enter the room.



Blast from the Past – Medium

On the final HVT mission you'll come to a bazaar with a fruit stand on the left. Head left into the nearby building and follow it left and left again. If done properly you'll find a table with some sausages and oranges on it. Interact for the Trophy.



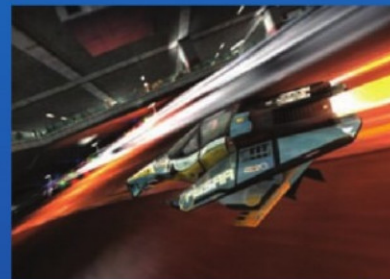
WIPEOUT 2048

The Unlucky 7 – Hard

Once you've unlocked the prototype Qirex with unlimited machine gun fire, play the first challenge stage and use it on all enemies until there is no one left. The race will be cancelled and you'll unlock this.

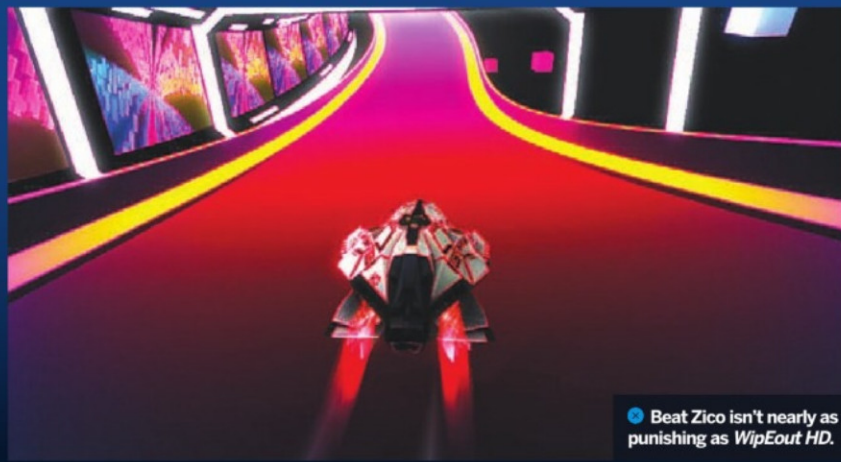
Mach 1.5 – Medium

You'll need to reach Zone 65 for this Trophy. Attempt it on Sol in 2050 where the Elite objective is to reach Zone 60. It's the easiest to reach and all you need is another extra five zones.



Beat Zico – Hard

Zico returns, but this is a little easier. Practice the track Altimar, and remember to get as many barrel rolls as possible. Get in four smooth barrel rolls and it should be enough to beat the time.



Beat Zico isn't nearly as punishing as Wipeout HD.

SUPER STARDUST DELTA

Multiplayer Hero – Easy

You'll need to earn a multiplier of 20 to get this, which means surviving for that long without dying once. Start on easy on the first planet in Arcade mode – you should get it after completing the second planet.



The Tokenizer – Medium

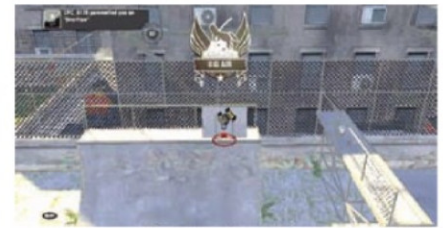
During Arcade play you'll encounter a string of bonus meteors. When the final (largest) meteor drops, don't shoot it. Instead, get close to it and activate boost right through the centre to collect 15 tokens at once.



MOTORSTORM RC

Ghost Busted – Medium

You'll want to get this early on before your friends start getting better at the game. Look for someone higher than you in an event and try to beat their ghost. Simple.



Custom Collection – Easy

You won't be able to do this until you've unlocked the Supercars. Simply enter the collection menu and change all eight types of vehicles to a different model and skin.

Swish – Easy

Enter the playground once you've collected 20 medals and head north. One of the half-pipes here has a basketball hoop; drive at an angle to the hoop with a decent amount of speed to land through it to unlock this.

As Good As New – Medium

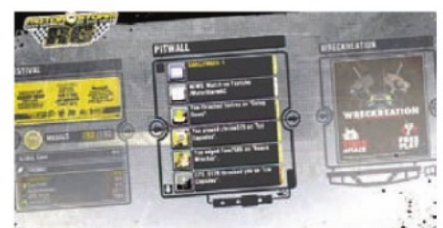
If you don't get this naturally, then retry the very first race event. Quickly grab first position by the first corner then carefully make your way around the course – the opposition are too slow to be any trouble.

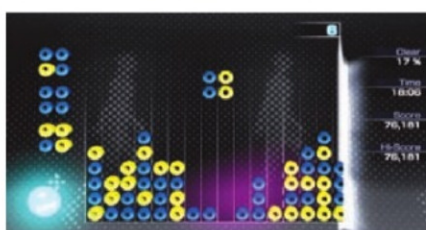
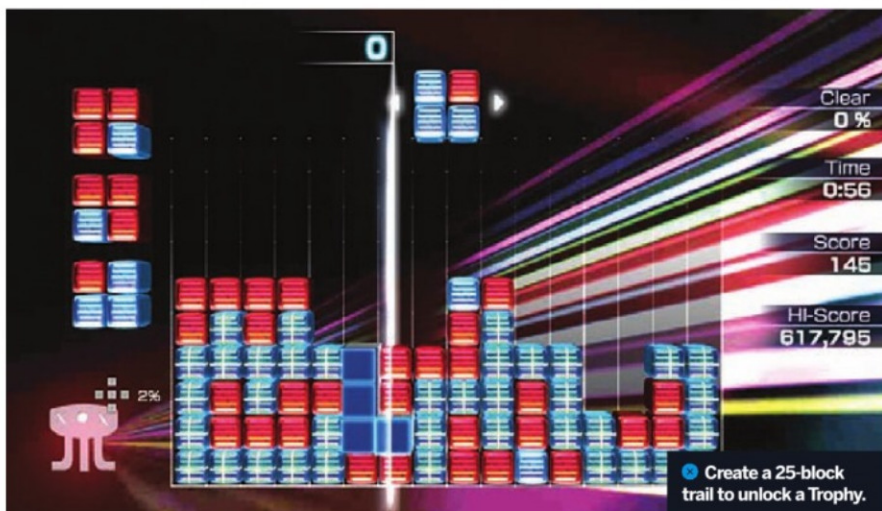
Wall Brawl – Hard

The Pitwall at the main menu will show any recent friend activity – the events marked red are challenges that you'll need to beat, and will only work once you've accepted and beat ten events through the Pitwall.

Rare Reward – Easy

For this you'll need to unlock at least two secret vehicles. Luckily it's quite easy, simply head to the playground and score ten and then 20 goals in the open net in the northwest corner of the area.





LUMINES ELECTRONIC SYMPHONY

Lucky 5 – Medium

Luck has everything to do with this Trophy, though you can help it by piling up the blocks as much as possible. The more blocks on screen, the higher chance you'll have of a randomising block creating five squares for you.

A Perfect Storm – Medium

As with Lucky 5, you can help this Trophy along by creating a 'path' of matching blocks. Avoid making full squares, and create a trail of at least 25 blocks to tie together with a Chain Block.

Time Stands Still – Hard

This tricky Trophy tasks you with erasing 30 blocks in 30 seconds. You'd be tempted to think about each placement, but really you need to be as quick as possible. Don't worry about mistakes and just keep trying.

Journey's End – Hard

This requires you to keep playing until you've unlocked the second batch of skins. The very last one is super fast with red and white blocks – but if you fail, just click retry and clear the skin. The Trophy still counts.

Black Belt – Medium

Master Mode has five different stages, and once you reach a new stage it will be unlocked to return to at any time. Don't worry about restarting, since it'll clear the screen for you.



EVERYBODY'S GOLF

Watery Wonder – Medium

To earn this Trophy you'll need to skim the surface of the water with a ball at least three times, then finish on land. Aim into a small lake with land on the other side and use as much spin as possible.



PLANTS VS ZOMBIES

No Fungus Among Us – Medium

This could well be the hardest Trophy in the game, but to unlock it easily simply head into any mini-game or puzzle stage that takes place at night and complete it without using mushrooms. Easy.



NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA PLUS

Rachel Master – Easy

One of the hidden Trophies, *Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus* has eight different 'kill 1,000 enemies with [insert name of weapon relevant to that Trophy]' but makes things easier for this one, which only asks you to kill 500 enemies with Rachel.



Vita Trophies Guide



ULTIMATE MARVEL VS CAPCOM 3

Advancing Guardian – Easy

You need to perform 100 Advancing Blocks to unlock this Trophy. All you need to do is when you're in block stun – the period of time after blocking an attack when you're unable to move – tap two attack buttons to push the opponent away.

A Friend In Need – Easy

This Trophy asks you to perform 100 Crossover Assists. Just press towards and assist when you're in block stun to tag your partner in with an attack. It costs one meter to perform and Jill's cartwheel kick is the best assist for this, as it's fully invincible.



Savage Playing – Easy

To unlock this Trophy you need to connect with 50 Snapback attacks, which is done by rolling the analogue stick from down to forward and pressing assist. It costs one meter and is best done with Ghost Rider, as his snapback attack is almost full screen.

Mutant Master – Medium

The easiest way to nab the needed Uncanny Combo is to have four meters on a Ryu, Iron Man and Dante team. As soon as your opponent calls in an assist character, press both assist buttons to catch both characters. Just as the supers end, cancel with X-Factor, then go straight into another beam super.

Incredible – Medium

To win without calling partners or switching out, try Hawkeye, super jumping backwards with quarter-forward and Light attacks and down/towards + Heavy (his slide) into launcher on the ground. If they miss a special move, fire off Giblet (quarter-circle forward + two attack buttons) before they can block again. If trapped in the corner, super jump over and past your opponent.



ARMY CORPS OF HELL

Pinnacle Of Gore – Hard

You need 66,666 jewels in your collection for this Trophy to pop and the easiest way to do this is to pound the Tartarus stage with Platinum ratings, which gives you 10,000 jewels as reward. This isn't easy to do by any means but once you've unlocked the Holy Star-Sinker weapon for the Magi class in stage 30, the task is made much, much easier. Otherwise keep replaying stage 40, which is arguably the easiest of the high-reward stages.



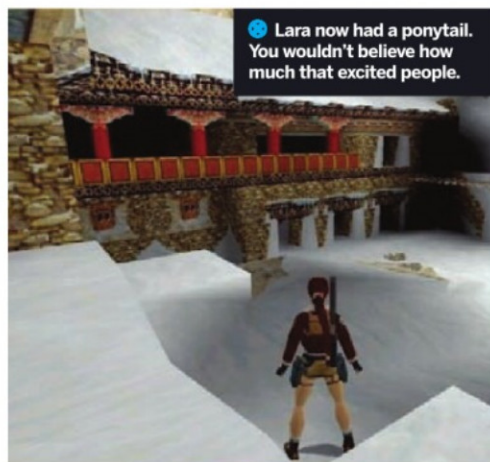
TOUCH MY KATAMARI

Fanatic – Very Hard

For this hidden Trophy, you need to 'obtain the ultimate fashion item'. You have to buy every possible item for the King before the golden poo hat (yes, that is the 'ultimate fashion item') is available to buy. If you want to grind the Trophy, turn off the automatic date setting on your Vita, load up Katamari and head to the Curious Collection screen. Then set the date on your Vita forward one day and repeat. After ten days, you'll get 256 candies each time you repeat this trick, until you have enough to buy all the items. Be warned, it takes over two hours to do this.



RETRO ON PSN... They're old but are they any good?



• Lara now had a ponytail. You wouldn't believe how much that excited people.



• The boat that created a thousand dreams. These were soon crushed of course.



Tomb Raider II

• Release date November 1997 • Publisher Eidos • Developer Core Design
• Games it influenced Every adventure game, most sequels



LOOKING BACK, 1997 seems like some sort of bizarro-world inversion of our own. Politicians

were liked. Labour was in power. Oasis were cool. England had a good football team. Eidos was at its zenith. *Tomb Raider* was the biggest thing in the world.

Specifically: Lara Croft was the biggest thing in the world. In the run-up to the release of *Tomb Raider II* everything had gone Lara mad. Magazine covers stacked up so much that newsagents looked like they had Lara wallpaper. Fawning editorials told everyone to shut up and get on the bandwagon. Eidos's HQ looked like Scrooge McDuck's money pit.

The pressure was mental, according to the development team. The first game was good, but not great. But it had a great hook, the character

had deliberately enhanced breasts, you could shoot animals. Everyone was a winner.

None more so than Sony, which secured exclusive rights to the sequels. So there was a lot riding on *Tomb Raider II*, for everyone involved. When it launched in a flurry of hype in late 1997, the world went predictably mental, and it went on to sell 8 million copies. But what was the game like? It was alright. It was more of the same with little twists. It was, you know. It was alright.

One of the largest changes was the addition of vehicles. Ideas for the original game that got cut thanks to time and space worries now found their output, and *Tomb Raider II* initially impressed thanks to them. With its complex contemporary spaces and vehicles to traverse them *Tomb Raider II* looked like a revolution. No more dicking about in decrepit tombs: now you were nautical, blasting around Venice's canals in a powerboat.

The changes were only skin deep, however. Underneath these fleeting moments, aside from all

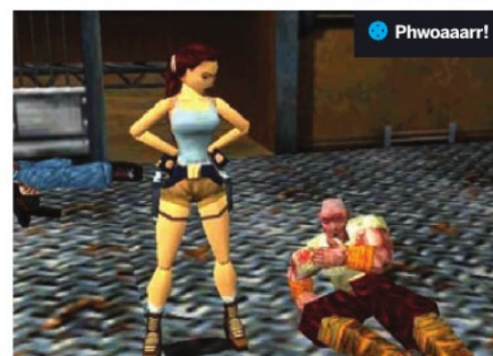
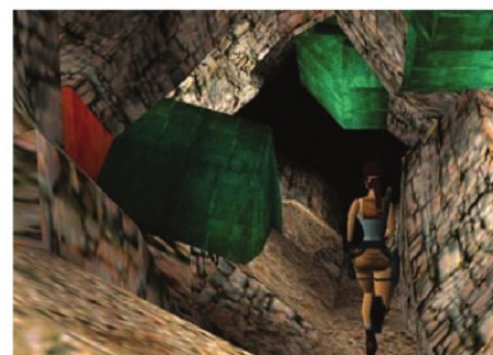
of the cosmetic tweaks – hairstyles, outfits – it was pretty much the same. With just a year to make the thing to avoid being flogged by their paymasters (probably) the developers used the same engine, merely updated. While it did look nicer, levels were still boxy and Lara was still a pain to control.

Not that it mattered in the end, of course, and again everyone was a winner. Sony had its exclusive deal, breaking the back of its competition by showing publishers where the money and the success was. Fans got another Lara adventure. Haters, naturally, were going to hate.

It wasn't a great game, but it was an important forecast for the rest of the generation, and even the one to come. Sony had everything on lock, and would continue to do so for the next ten or so years. *Tomb Raider* was caught in a cycle it couldn't break, exhausting itself, and its popularity, trying to maintain its success. Videogames could be cultural events. Like it or not, *Tomb Raider* was important.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 28 • 95%

"A fine sequel that easily surpasses the first!"



• Phwoaaarr!

NEVER COMING TO PSN #6



Independence Day



- Release date July 1997
- Developer Radical Entertainment

UNIVERSAL TRUTH NUMBER 1: movie tie-ins, by and large, will always be rubbish. It's true now, it'll be true in the future, and it was definitely true in the past, when bobbins like this was released roughly every ten seconds. To think someone actually paid money for this makes us want to double our efforts on that time machine.

Released the year after the movie, *Independence Day* was an arcadey flight-based shoot-'em-up which saw you fighting off alien craft and completing objectives. An ever-present timer ticked down towards disaster, presumably

in an attempt to inject some urgency into proceedings. It didn't, of course. In actuality it probably just marked off the seconds that players remained interested in this nonsense.

Independence Day wasn't any fun to play, devolving into rinse and repeat exercises that required little thought or skill or full working use of both hands to complete. It had some interesting mechanics, such as two-player link-up so you and a friend could be bored at the same time.

The 'lives' system also had potential: players had a certain amount of planes to choose from. Once you lost the craft, it was gone, which could have led to tactical encounters. But it didn't, of course, and the game was almost as bland as Bill Pullman's acting.

WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT

BMX XXX

ONE OF THE sorriest games ever released, *BMX XXX* is utter guff in every respect. Building on the extreme sports craze of the day, when Tony Hawk was still king and even Kelly Slater could get a surfing game made, BMX superstar Dave Mirra joined forces with Acclaim to make – surprise! – *Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX*. It was okay. Sequels followed. They were also okay. Then Acclaim, never shy of gutter-press-baiting PR stunts, decided to make a BMX game with nudity. Dave Mirra sued to get his name removed, the game sold naff all and the franchise was promptly buried.

Everything about *BMX XXX* is dumb. The nudity consists of being able to make a bare-breasted character, and after completing certain objectives such as 'free the poo-flinging space monkeys' or 'probe the aliens' (IT'S HUMOUR SEE) you could watch some grainy videos of bored women stripping off. It was 2002, internet filth was harder to find. Or was it? We can't remember. Whatever. If we're going to ignore the grubby content, the nerdy side of us hates the game mechanics, the wonky collision detection, the insanely tough difficulty, the awful animations and the cluttered levels.

Nobody won here. A cheap marketing trick to try to disguise a terrible game, the hilarity was compounded when Sony Computer Entertainment America ruled that the boobs had to be censored, turning *BMX XXX* into... well, *BMX*. Good job team!



RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



Colony Wars

BOASTING IMPRESSIVE GRAPHICS for the time, certain members of *Play* still get all misty eyed about this. Heart-rending nostalgia aside, we'll leave it thanks: the past is a foreign country etc...



Capcom Vs SNK 2

FULL DISCLOSURE: THIS game is brilliant. Get it for no pounds at your local second-hand game emporium (if it still exists). That said, we don't need to go back. Our K-Groove Maki/Blanka/Cammy team lives on forever.



Star Wars Battlefront II

A GOOD GAME, now rendered too painful to play thanks to the deadening knowledge that we should have had a sequel by now. Rumours persist it'll still see the light of day, however...



Driver 3

THIS MASTERPIECE OF fail arrived on a tsunami of hype, before it was made clear it wasn't anywhere near finished. We sometimes think we want to play it and laugh at it again. But nah.

PLAY#x PlayList

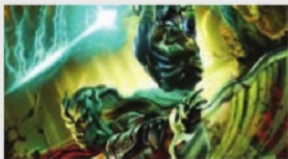
If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

TEAM PICKS PS2 CLASSICS RELEASES WE WANT TO SEE



top five RYAN KING

- 1 Haunting Ground
- 2 Odin Sphere
- 3 Onimusha 3
- 4 Killer7
- 5 Dog's Life



top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 SSX 3
- 2 Pro Evolution Soccer 6
- 3 Legacy Of Kain: Defiance
- 4 TimeSplitters: Future Perfect
- 5 Stuntman



top five STEVE BURNS

- 1 Pro Evolution Soccer 6
- 2 SOS: The Final Escape
- 3 XIII
- 4 Gregory Horror Show
- 5 Killer7



top five DAN PEEL

- 1 GrimGrimoire
- 2 We Love Katamari
- 3 Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness
- 4 Okami
- 5 Final Fantasy XII

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
More than enough additions to take the Assassin's Creed formula into modern classic territory.		
Assassin's Creed Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Rocksteady's sequel to the excellent Arkham Asylum is a serious contender for game of the year.		
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%

game	issue	score
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.		
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
Damnation	181	38%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Sequel to one of the hardest games in recent times, Dark Souls is another superb release from developer From Software.		
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
The point where the Dead Space series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.		
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Worries: unfounded. Fun: lots of it. True Deus Ex experience: confirmed. Boss battles: bloody awful.		
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
DiRT 3	206	85%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
It's just like playing Guitar Hero for the first time all over again, although DJ Hero is slightly more expensive.		
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%

game	issue	score
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.		
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
God Of War III	190	88%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Mass Effect 3 PS3	93%	Puddle PSN	76%	Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3 PSV	80%
SSX PS3	45%	God Hand PSN	83%	Rayman Origins PSV	84%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy PS3	82%	Journey PSN	87%	Lumines Electric Symphony PSV	85%
Syndicate PS3	78%	Gotham City Impostors PSN	78%	Ridge Racer PSV	48%
Yakuza: Dead Souls PS3	60%	The Simpsons: Arcade Game PSN	54%	Hustle Kings PSV	81%
Asura's Wrath PS3	67%	Escape Plan PSV	81%	Super Stardust Delta PSV	84%
Twisted Metal PS3	68%	FIFA Football PSV	80%	Unit 13 PSV	67%
Binary Domain PS3	70%	Touch My Katamari PSV	83%		
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle PS3	52%	BlazBlue: Continuum Shift PSV	85%		

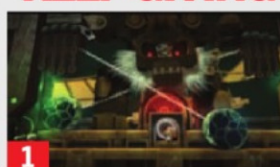
game	issue	score
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Homefront	203	69%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
Largely ignored when they were first released, gamers can now enjoy these wonderful games in brilliant HD.		
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
L.A. Noire	206	91%
Not perfect but Rockstar's new IP introduces pioneering facial-capture technology and interesting gameplay.		
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2:		
The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%

game	issue	score
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Despite having arguably one of the worst endings in videogame history, this is still a must for any serious videogame collection.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love LBP you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
Moto GP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
MX Vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
nail'd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Hot Pursuit is one of the best arcade racers of all time - pure, unadulterated bliss in game form.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%

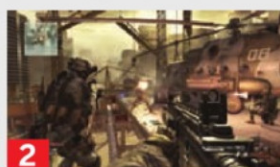
game	issue	score
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Portal 2	205	95%
Another exceptional realisation from Valve, gamers are going to be talking about Portal 2 for a long time to come.		
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Puma After Hours Athletes	214	58%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Relocates the familiar GTA formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, Resistance 2 is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for Colin McRae. Not much in it, really.		
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%

*denotes import review

TOP TEN GAMES THAT KEEP GIVING



1 LittleBigPlanet 2



2 Modern Warfare 3



3 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim



4 Battlefield 3



5 Wipeout 2048



6 Saints Row: The Third



7 Dark Souls



8 Gran Turismo 5



9 Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception



10 PES 2012

PS3 TOP FIVES



FPS

- 1 Battlefield 3
- 1 Modern Warfare 3
- 3 Resistance 3
- 4 Portal 2
- 5 Deus Ex: Human Revolution



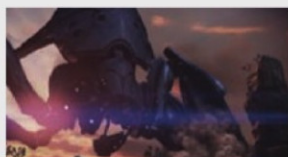
RACING

- 1 Gran Turismo 5
- 2 WipEout 2048
- 3 Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit
- 4 DiRT 3
- 5 Blur



SPORTS

- 1 NBA 2K12
- 2 Virtua Tennis 4
- 3 Everybody's Golf
- 4 FIFA 12
- 5 PES 12



ADVENTURE

- 1 Mass Effect 3
- 2 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 3 Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
- 4 Dark Souls
- 5 Saints Row: The Third



FIGHTING

- 1 Street Fighter III
- 2 BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend
- 3 Tekken 6
- 4 Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3
- 5 Soul Calibur V

game	issue	score
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Just beating <i>Blur</i> to the chequered flag, <i>Split/Second</i> is a wonderfully intense racing game in the <i>Burnout</i> mould.		
Sports Champions	196	83%
SSX	216	45%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tekken 6	184	94%
There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, <i>nothing</i> , stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
Tekken Hybrid	213	79%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
WARNING: The latest addition to Bethesda's superb franchise will seriously damage your social life.		
The Fight	199	42%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
The Orange Box	161	93%
The Saboteur	187	67%
The Shoot	199	76%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%

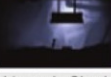
game	issue	score
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Classics Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
Undisputed is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages.		
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Fans of the series won't be disappointed as Drake returns with some exceptional set pieces and superb action.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
A brilliant surprise from the developer of <i>Bayonetta</i> and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.		
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE '12	212	50%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%

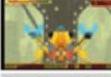
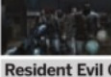
game	issue	score
Yoostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

PS STORE LISTING



1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for.		
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arc The Lad	215	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i> . Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
It doesn't have <i>MW2</i> 's polish but it's a great game both as a slice of history and in its own right.		
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3		
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
This is yet another beautiful, cute and high-class puzzler on the PSN that works perfectly and is a joy to play.		
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubixx HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%

game	issue	score
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
Droplitz	184	91%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome II	202	83%
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Euforia	212	85%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
 This scrolling-fighter classic from 1989 makes an almost flawless appearance on PSN. Stick it on your download list.		
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
 Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
fIOW	151	90%
 Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. fIOW is an innovative title available on the Network.		
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
From Dust	211	82%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
God Hand	216	83%
Gotham City Impostors	216	78%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
inFamous: Festival Of Blood	212	76%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
 Simply put, Joe Danger is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Journey	216	87%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Jurassic Park: The Game	214	32%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
 Lara is back to her best in The Guardian Of Light. Tomb Raider fans will love it and for just \$9.99 everyone else should, too.		
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Limbo	209	90%
 We had to wait a while, but just like with Braid it in no way negatively impacts the quality of what is just that – a quality experience.		
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%

game	issue	score
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	210	52%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
 While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
NBA Jam: On Fire Edition	212	64%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numbast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
 Bold, bright, insanely addictive – this re-imagining of the retro classic is an essential addition to anybody's PSN library.		
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
 If you like challenges, shooting, pixels and junk, then this combines all four of those and adds in several splashes of style as well.		
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puddle	216	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
 One of the best games ever made comes to PSN. Unfortunately it also brings with it a rather high price tag.		
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Rift: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
 This is even better than the first episode due to the fact it has better puzzles and even funnier dialogue.		
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
Section 8	193	78%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%

game	issue	score
Sonic 4: Episode One	199	82%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
 The best version of one of the best fighting games ever released, or something. We don't know, mainly because Ryan isn't writing this.		
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
The Baconing	210	72%
The Last Guy	171	91%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	195	92%
 LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.		
The Simpsons: Arcade Game	216	54%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotal: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Under Siege	207	71%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipeOut	01	89%
WipeOut HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Worms	179	91%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yar's Revenge	206	57%
Zack Zero	215	73%
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zuma	182	78%

PS VITA LISTING	issue	score
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%

PS3'S BEST GAMES MODNATION RACERS 90%, PLAY 192



There comes a time when you have to rally to a cause – defend something that doesn't seem able to defend itself. Now is one of those times, and we are jumping to the defence of the original PS3 version of this kart racer.



ModNation Racers has suffered the indignity of a pretty bad Vita version and a boring PSP game, as well as now being seemingly dropped in favour of LittleBigPlanet Kart Mania Team Racing. As such, people have forgotten the original was one thing: good.



It filled a gap we didn't even realise needed filling, throwing a good, fun kart racing game in our direction to distract us from our work and... the... thing... with the... VROOM! Wait, sorry – got a bit mixed up there.



Not only was it solid racing fun, it was home – and still is – to some brilliant track, racer and kart creation tools. It may be easier to make tracks on the Vita game, but nobody cares because the rest of it is a bit pump.



So spare a thought for the forgotten, good, ModNation Racers. The one that drove away happily into the sunset, not realising its spin-offs would stay behind, fresh in the memory and... well, spin off the track altogether. Come back ModNation PS3 – we miss you.

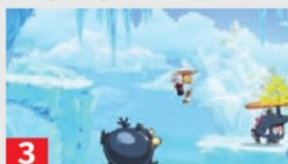
TOP TEN VITA GAMES



1
WipEout 2048



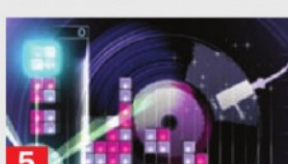
2
Everybody's Golf



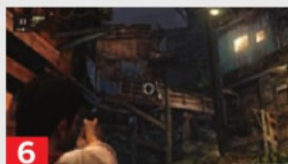
3
Rayman Origins



4
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend



5
Lumines Electronic Symphony



6
Uncharted: Golden Abyss



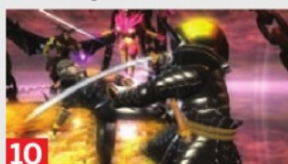
7
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition



8
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3



9
Touch My Katamari



10
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus

Unit 13	216	67%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
WipEout 2048	215	87%

PSP LISTING



300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%

*denotes import review

game	issue	score
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman!		
What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
LocoRoco	143	94%
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
A fantastic entry in the <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> series and one of the best games on PSP. Wonderful.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Persona 2: Innocent Sin	214	65%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCrois	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%

game	issue	score
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play. <i>Tekken 6</i> is the best game of the series on PSP.		
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Legend Of Heroes: Trails In The Sky	214	75%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld <i>WipEout</i> game could be. <i>Pure</i> is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%



WHAT (have they been playing?):

JOE DANGER

WHO (who are they?):

Ian Dransfield

WHY (was it chosen?):

The 360 release. No, really

IT'S HARD TO be honest, at least like this, but *Joe Danger* on PS3 is an inferior version to that on Xbox 360. This is saddening and ever-so-slightly annoying, though admittedly I do have some grudging respect for Hello Games sticking to its guns and not bringing the few extras from the Live version to PSN (SEN, whatever). But just because it has a slightly better version doesn't mean the one we have on PS3 doesn't exist any more – in fact, it actually *does* exist... any more... and it's still absolutely brilliant.

The simple premise is still straightforward

enough to drag you in wholeheartedly. The control system, its responsiveness and the speed at which you can retry a section (an element that should never be overlooked), makes for a joyous experience in frantic complexity. It's compulsive. I love it. Over a recent stay at a friend's house we ended up playing the game, passing the pad between us, for hours. It was meant to be 'a quick couple of turns' before going out. We didn't go out. *Joe Danger* still has that sort of power. It sucks you in and doesn't let you go – and you don't even need a stupid Special Edition.

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

What has the Play team been indulging in this month?

WHAT (have they been playing?):

VIRTUA FIGHTER

WHO (are they?):

Ryan King

WHY (was it chosen?):

Final Showdown is out soon

I WAS A massive Sega fanboy back in the day, in every sense of the word. My first console was Master System, which my mum bought for me because "Nintendo sucks" (to this day I have no idea why she said that or even why she had an opinion on Sega versus Nintendo), and that set me on the Sega path through to the Dreamcast.

Sony came calling when someone brought a PlayStation and *ISS Pro '98* into college one day and that became our lunchtime ritual but I was a Sega fanboy up until it bowed out the hardware arms race with a bloody nose. Point is that Sega knew how to make great games. Not good games but *great* games.

Jet Set Radio, *Panzer Dragoon*, *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Virtua Fighter*, *Crazy Taxi*, *Shenmue*, *Sega Rally*, *Streets Of Rage*... it's sad to see how far Sega has fallen. But whatever. *Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown* is out this summer. I'M SUPER PUMPED. *Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution* is my favourite fighting game of all time. Fast, tactical, balanced, deep, it's the game that keeps on giving without relying on gimmicks or nonsense. And *Jet Set Radio* is coming to PSN! If the rumours of *Shenmue HD* are also true, I'm not going to see a single ray of sunshine this summer. Sega fo' life! Come at me bro.



PS3'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LIKE...



Decent representations of a real, human relationship

PLAY: CATHERINE

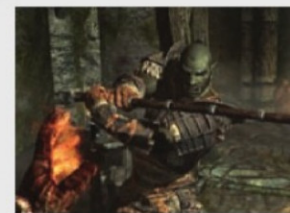
Say what you want about the puzzle bits, *Catherine* presents players with an almost accurate representation of a relationship between a young couple. In a videogame. This is absolute madness, clearly, and we must return to our brainless shooters as fast as possible.



Getting catchy songs stuck in your head

PLAY: PLANTS VS ZOMBIES

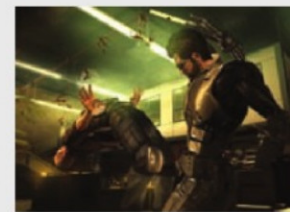
You have to complete it, but it's a good game so you will persevere with it (and then play through it again, we're sure). But on completion you are rewarded with a musical number sure to get stuck in your head. We still sing it, and we finished the game years ago.



Playing games that have finally been fixed (mostly)

PLAY: THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

We genuinely didn't encounter any game-breaking bugs with *Skyrim*, but that's not to say they weren't there. They were. But now they've been (mostly) fixed, so it's the perfect time to jump in and get a (mostly) fixed experience (mostly).



Being annoyed by boss fights

PLAY: DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

Plenty of games offer brilliant boss fights, but it takes a real character to offer a brilliant game surrounded by terrible boss fights. *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* fits the bill perfectly. It's an excellent title in every way – except for the bullshit bosses.



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"Last Exit remains our first port of call for all subtly movie-centric gear." EMPIRE

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The Voice Of PlayStation
Gaming For Over A Decade

Next Month

次の定期刊行物

ON SALE
10 MAY

TOMB RAIDER

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

- The truth revealed on why the dramatic reboot was needed
- Why Lara Croft is vital to the future of PlayStation 3
- Stunning ten-minute exclusive feature on our free DVD

UNLOCK PSN STORE

Find out how to ram-raid the Japanese and US PSN Stores for the best goodies

► Issue 218 includes

FREE
PS3 DVD
OUR BIGGEST EVER!

PLAY



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page 66
NEVER MISS
AN ISSUE!

ONLY IN PLAY

THE FPS SHOWDOWN

From *Black Ops 2* to *BioShock Infinite*,
there can be only one winner

BORDERLANDS 2

The first hands-on report tells
you EXACTLY how it plays



On Your Free Disc

Highlights of your packed PlayStation 3 video hub



ASSASSIN'S CREED III STUNNING DEBUT TRAILER

Ubisoft confirmed its flagship series will get a full, 'proper' sequel in the way it knows how to make announcements best – a crisp, punchy trailer with dramatic editing and an ending that leaves you wanting to know more. Go watch it. Now. That's an order.



HD VIDEO TRAILERS

BORDERLANDS 2 DOOMSDAY IS HERE

If you want your eyes to be tickled by lush HD while your ears rattle to the sound of empty shells clanging on the floor, check out the Doomsday trailer for *Borderlands 2* in gorgeous high definition. It's pretty (get it?) special... don't forget we've got ten HD trailers in total on the disc!

WATCH NOW: *Far Cry 3*, *Aliens: Colonial Marines*, *Max Payne 3*, *Sleeping Dogs*, *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter*



EXCLUSIVE FEATURES

SF X TEKKEN RECTAL GAS!

We've been through *Street Fighter X Tekken* and picked the ten most explosive moves across the entire cast, from the combo repetition of King's knee to Kuma's inventive and deadly use for rectal gas. Yes, you read that right. Rectal gas. From a bear.

THE INSIDE TRACK: PS2 Classic – *God Hand*, Lady-On-Lady Romance – *Mass Effect 3*, Angle Trailer – *The Last Of Us*

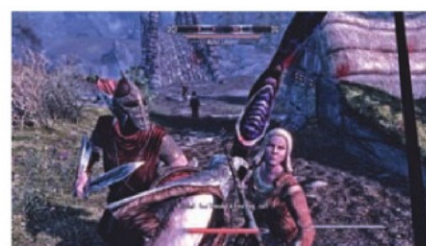


VIDEO REVIEWS

MASS EFFECT 3 WORTH THE CONTROVERSY?

Has the controversy over *Mass Effect 3*'s ending seen you go from must-buy to must-wait? Our video review will help you make up your mind, with the gameplay footage backed up by *Play*'s velvet tones giving you the definitive verdict on whether to take the leap.

REVIEWED THIS MONTH: *Mass Effect 3*, *FIFA Street*, *Asura's Wrath*, *Journey*, *Binary Domain*, *PS Vita Round-Up*

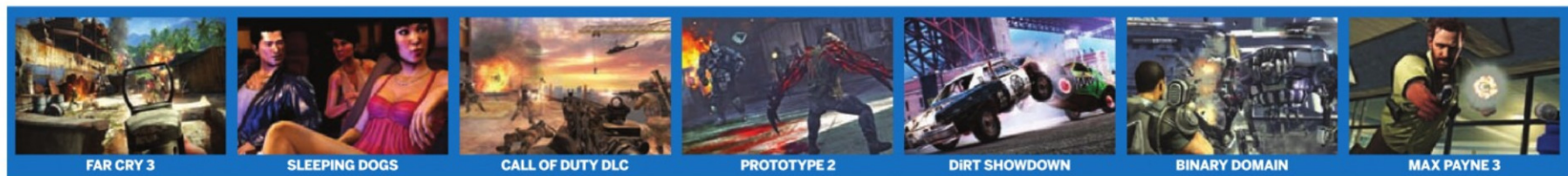


VIDEO GUIDES

SKYRIM EVERY SECRET EXPOSED

Think you've seen everything there is to see in *Skyrim*? You may be right but until you run through our exhaustive checklist, there's no way to know for sure. We've covered every secret in this massive game, so you may find something you've never seen before...

GET AHEAD ON: *Skyrim* – Every Secret, *Mass Effect 3* – Scanning, *Call Of Duty* – DLC Maps Walkthrough



FAR CRY 3

SLEEPING DOGS

CALL OF DUTY DLC

PROTOTYPE 2

DIRT SHOWDOWN

BINARY DOMAIN

MAX PAYNE 3

KONAMI

SILENT HILL DOWNPOUR

DISCOVER A BRAND
NEW HORROR
WITH SILENT HILL
DOWNPOUR

SILENT HILL HD COLLECTION

RELIVE TWO CLASSIC GAMES IN THE
SERIES, REMASTERED IN TERRIFYING HD.



PS3
PlayStation 3



PlayStation
Network

XBOX 360

XBOX
LIVE

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METAL GEAR SOLID 3
SNAKE EATER

METAL GEAR SOLID 2
SONS OF LIBERTY

METAL GEAR SOLID
PEACE WALKER



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